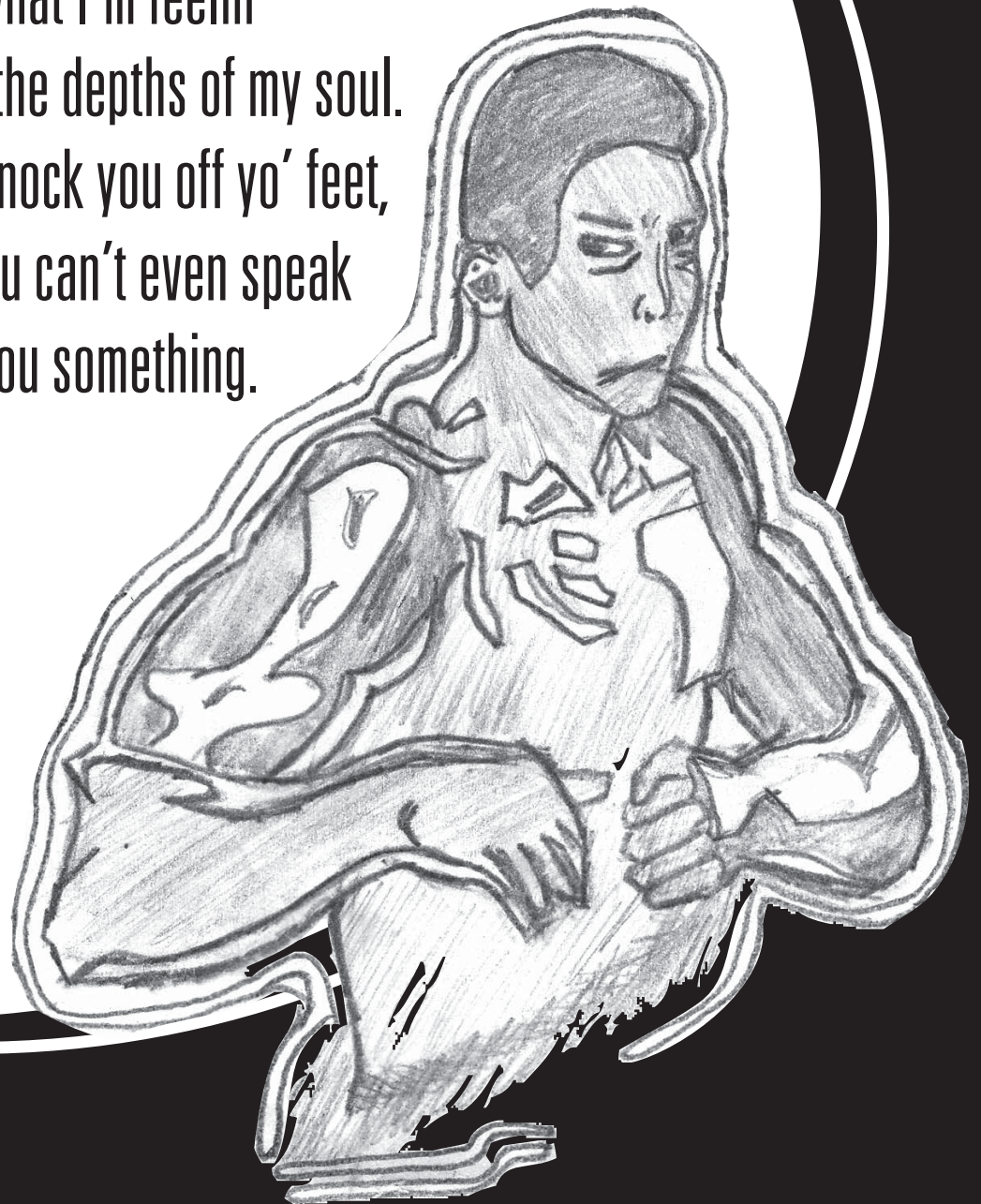


I want my words to make you cry.  
I want them to wake up your mind  
to let you feel what I'm saying inside.  
I want you to know what I'm feelin'  
deep down inside in the depths of my soul.  
I want my words to knock you off yo' feet,  
to the point where you can't even speak  
because I'm telling you something.  
Something strong,  
something real,  
something you will  
never forget

check out the rest of LaRonda's POW on page 8



# EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 11.47

**Y**es it is, here we are again, "The Beat Within." We are glad to have your presence with us another week. This week in issue 11.47, we're the giving the honor of writing this Ed. Note to Allan Tinker, who has been a very loyal colleague, adviser and friend to all of us for many years. So, without further ado, here it is. Allan Tinker, come on stage!

Several years ago in a Juvenile Hall I do workshops, there was a young man whose writing was off the charts — both in terms of style and content. He had been a gang-banger (well, actually in a sense he still was, since he'd never been jumped out) and a writer (tagger) — and his rhymes were white hot, burning up the page week after week in The Beat. Over time, both through his writings and through personal conversation, we got to know his story, both in terms of what he'd done in the past, what his plans were at present, and what he planned to do in the future (which we heard through the grapevine, he is to this day doing, achieving goal after goal day by day).

He changed his life, but he never lost his anger or his edge — or not when we knew him, anyway. He simply learned to focus his anger in productive channels, one of which was his writing for The Beat Within. Upon his release, his family moved to another but nearby town, where he enrolled in community college classes. But that's not the most amazing part of the story. The most amazing part of his life story is that: He died, literally died, heart-stopped, flat line on the monitor beside the operating table! This part of the story we first heard from his best friend, also a terrific Beat writer who tried to change his life but, last we heard, messed up and landed himself in county jail. Anyway, this other Beat writer was there at the hospital in the waiting room with his homie's mother while homie was on the operating table. Then someone came out and told her that her son had died, but he hadn't. Somehow he came back! Maybe it was the shot (injection) they gave him, or the electro-shock, or just a miracle — but his heart started beating again.

So, you may ask, how'd he get to that point to begin with? He'd been a drug dealer, and having a big heart, he'd also brought his cousin into the business, along with providing him a bed to sleep in and food to eat, which is to say, he took him into his own family's home like a brother. But his cousin began using the product. In any case, one day our boy went to the house where the drugs got distributed by this guy who had just recently taken over for another guy who'd been doing it for years. So our boy is chilling with everyone else in the room, getting smoked out, when the head man asks him to kill someone, another homie selling drugs on another spot but coming out of this same house — 'cause the new boss man didn't trust him and wanted someone else on the spot. So our guy said, "No, I know him. I won't do it."

Soon after, he noticed the atmosphere in the room seemed to change, and he got spooked. He decided that he'd stay laid back for another minute, and then hit the door as fast he could, which he did — and took off running down the street. He heard footsteps behind him and ran harder. After a couple of blocks, he looked back and saw that it was his cousin. So he stopped, and his cousin walked up to him, pulled a knife, stabbed him seventeen times, and walked away. Our boy crumpled and sat on the curb, bleeding, too weak to move, when another homeboy walked by, saw him bleeding to death and called 911.

The rest of the story you know, except the part that maybe blew our minds the most. After he recovered, got released from the hospital, and came to juvenile hall — he forgave his cousin! Yeah, we could hardly believe it! But he knew his cousin was certifiably insane, and strung out on crystal as he had been at the time, even crazier than usual. He told us that his cousin was presently in a drug rehab program, and that he had no plans to ever kick it again

with him, but honestly — aside from knowing it would be stupid — did not even want to seek revenge. Instead, he focused all of his mind and energy on one goal: changing his life, which, as per above, we hear by word of mouth, he did. And, since living a better life is a life-long endeavor, we assume he is still doing, until and unless we hear otherwise.

Thank you Allan Tinker. It's obvious from this very powerful story why this esteemed Beat colleague is so respected by us and by those young people fortunate enough to have his direct touch in their lives. By the way, you can always find Allan every Tuesday in Alameda County Juvenile Hall aka 150 and a couple times a month in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall!

All right, allow us to share with you the topics that were discussed prior to the writing featured in this magnificent issue! The first one is, "Living When The Life You Know Is Taken Away!"

Sometimes, situations happen to us, and we're forced to live life like we've never had to live it before without any way of ever going back. We're not talking about getting locked up for a while before resuming your old life. We're thinking about more serious changes, like losing your ability to walk after getting into a car accident — or a gun fight... Or suddenly having to be responsible for a new life you've brought into the world... Or having to adjust to a life sentence in prison...

Can you imagine yourself in a situation like this? Describe the situation, and tell us how you would pull through. What adjustments would you have to make? What could you say to someone in this situation to offer hope?

Our second topic, "I Thought I knew you, but..."

Last but not least, "What Is Your Definition Of Freedom?"

OK, this week we have some powerful Pieces Of the Week (POWs). Those writers whose work we flag for special attention are Savage who writes two, Big Vic, Lil' Man Man all from the 150 Crew, Uriel, Jesse, Kyle, all Santa Cruz, Vago, Lion fishy, LaRonda who writes two, Aj, T-Time all from SF/YGC and last but not least Daniel The Bird from Arizona.

We also want to remind you of our current (the 16th) editorial note writing contest: "A Letter To The President." We want you serious writers to address a letter to President Bush which we will not only post in The Beat Within publication and on our website, but also send them off to the White House, too! Put it down as powerfully and as persuasively as we know you can, but don't write anything that's going to have the feds coming for you...

The "new" deadline for contest submissions is just before Christmas (around the corner), December 21, 2006. All the contest pieces will be featured in the BWO (Beat Without) section of the "big" Beat over several issues, and once all have been featured, we will select four "winners" (although, the way we look at it, everyone who writes in this wonderful publication is a winner). Our top choice will receive a one-hundred-dollar money order; second place will get a fifty-dollar money order; and third and fourth-place winners will each receive a twenty-five-dollar money order. You Santa Clara writers are the equal of our finest writers, so go to it!

This issue of The Beat is dedicated to the remarkable Allan Tinker who has turned his own personal history with drug abuse into a crusade to save our children from the many lethal mine fields — drugs, guns, gangs, and addictions of every kind — that this generation must contend with. His own life is example enough of the power of the human spirit to surmount and overcome our own conditioning, our own lifestyles that we hold onto so desperately, even when they are doing us harm! He continues to inspire us, and we hope that inspiration infects you all. Thank you, Allan.

**The Beat Within**, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

**To our writers:** What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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**Art:** Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

**Spiritual Advisor:** Jack Jacqua

**Special Volunteer:** Nancy DeMartini

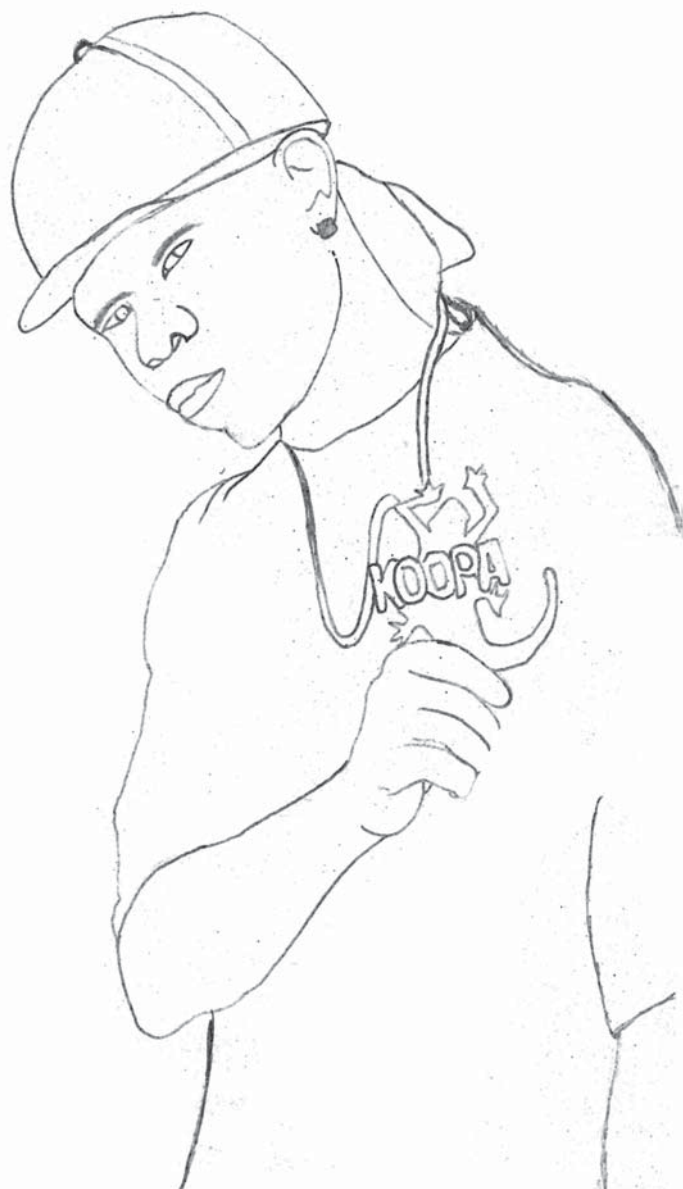
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[www.thebeatwithin.org](http://www.thebeatwithin.org)

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## I Thought You Cared

I thought I knew you but then you played me good. I can't believe you aren't the person I thought you were. But hey, no hard feeling. You won and I lost.

I thought that I should tell you, but it's hard to express my feelings with you. You broke my heart. All that runs through my head is – “why did you play me so bad?”

I know that I'm not perfect, but hey, I love you with all my heart. And now that I'm locked up for maybe a long time, you got tired of waiting for me. That is OK. You will always be in my heart. But I will find a way to get you off my mind.

But life in here sucks and I guess that I am going to have to be in here. But I don't trip. I don't trip at all. That is on you. But I want to tell you that I never screw up. Time flies and I will be out one day.

**-Uriel, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat:** You are in a difficult situation, but we have observed that you are handling it very well. We can't tell you that everything will be all right. But we know that with your determination, you will be able to accomplish things you can't even imagine right now. Anyone who can teach himself to read and write, in two years, almost without help, can do great things. We believe that your journey is just beginning. Reading, writing, reading, writing and more reading and writing will be of much comfort and use to you. Please let us know if we can help you in this regard.

This goes out to everyone (even if you are doing time and think your life is hopeless) — I think that everyone can still change, and turn your life around. Even small changes are still changes, so no one should give up.

## Life Taken Away

Some, at the mere sound of the numbers and letters  
lock down

25 with an “L” or even worse is hard to get around  
Lifetimes seem to be ahead but freedom is not near  
Knowledge of the truth hurts so some shed tears  
Nowadays young boys are forced to be men  
Murders being committed and many fall to the pen  
Life's tough enough but seems to be getting harder  
Some lose hope while incarcerated within barbed-wire  
guarders

The systems all messed and meant for fail

Hard to get out of, just as to send mail

Monitored closely and treated like animals

When we really the evolution of the new-found  
mammals

Soon to be extinct due to careless people in society  
No one wants to go, though, but gradually we decrease  
in quantity

**-Vago B4, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** Nice piece of art! It is clear to see that you are a deep thinker and very much aware of what is going on around you. We particularly like the reference to “careless people in society” bringing human beings to extinction because it brings in our politicians (there will probably be a million fewer living people when our war in Iraq finally is over), rich business people who don't care that they're making their fortunes by polluting the atmosphere and oceans, and most of the rest of us who do nothing when we see what is happening to destroy the world! Plus, it doesn't let the young off the hook for their own contributions to the messed up society we all live in. It's good to know that there are young people such as yourself who are alert and on top of the odds that are stacked up against you, and it would be good to know that you plan to do some changing of your own life so that you become part of the solution instead of the problem.

## Pain, Pain, Pain ...

i'm sitting in my room

looking at four white walls

i peer out my window to see in the hall

staff got the nerve to tell me to sit down

i yell out my door and say screw you

they got no respect for me

i lost my dignity

my pride is screwed up

because I have no family

i talk to god and i always ask

why i gotta be here

why i shed so many tears

why my heart is filled with so much fear

why i'm trapped in the headlights like a blind reindeer

but only god i fear

why you won't take me from here

all this stress in my chest

all this hurt in my soul

all this rage fills my head with headaches and pain

all i got to say is god rescue me

my heart is filled with rain

**-Savage, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** When rage comes to your door, open it up and welcome it in — then open up the backdoor of your heart and let it out again. As you get better at this, the rage will persist for shorter and shorter spans of time, which will allow you to feel greater peace of mind. It's not like the pain will disappear, but nursing rage and fear just make it that much worse for you in her. When fear comes to your door, open it up and welcome it in — then open the backdoor of your heart and let it out again. Don't make your heart like this terrible cell in which you dwell, one way in and no way out, till someone else with a key comes around. Your dignity lies within. That's the sacred place God put it in. Both the beginning and the end of your respect and dignity, lie within your own heart, mind and soul — neither staff nor anyone else can rob you of that inner wealth unless you give it away in a fit of fear or rage. Pain will come and go, but the hurt in your soul is a guiding light, and when you're ready to see with inner sight, you'll be ready to take control and rescue yourself (armed with love, which is God's might). Those of us who have no family, have suffered a great calamity, but we can learn to mother ourselves. Let love within, and you can nurse yourself back to health again. If you never were healthy before, it's still a promise God made you before you were born. (R.S. You are one terrific poet! You must know it, 'cause you sure do show it!)

## Do I Really Know You?

I thought I knew you, but I really don't know. I thought that you were smart. I thought that you really cared about me. I thought that I knew how you think. I really thought that I knew myself well, but I don't.

Now, as I count every day that I'm here, I also learn more about me. I have found out that I had a weakness for the streets. I found out that I don't know everything and still got a lot more to learn. I have realized that I ain't always gonna get away from the cops.

Now that I know all that and want to change my life, it is now not in my hands as it used to be. I could have stayed in school, but I cut. I could have stopped using drugs, but I didn't. Now that I want to change, it's up to the judge to let me change.

I just hope that someday I will get out and own my own business, and not end up shot, or locked up. This goes out to everyone (even if you are doing time and think your life is hopeless) — I think that everyone can still change, and turn your life around. Even small changes are still changes, so no one should give up. Good luck to everyone and take it easy.

**-Lionfishy B4, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** There's an old saying — “Too soon old, too late smart” — that comes to mind when we read this fine piece of self-aware and probing writing. But what we conclude is that you are proving that slogan wrong! This piece tells us that you already are smart (not too late), and that, even though you have a very responsible and mature outlook, you're still young! So, based on this, we have high expectations for your future. Learning that there is always more to learn (and that the process of self-education never ends) is the beginning of true wisdom! But it's really not up to the judge to let you change. Change is something that comes from the inside and only up to the person making the change. Yes, the judge can determine your immediate circumstances, but it's you who will determine the ultimate picture. In that sense, you are your own best judge! Thank you for this very thoughtful piece.

The only real reason you go on in this world with the same blood coursing through your veins that you were given when your beautiful mother gave you life is only for the sweet desire to live and make it to the end no matter when it is.

## My Great Grandma

My great grandma Laura was a great woman. She had 11 children. My grandma Annette was one of her 11 children. Annette had four children; one of those four was my mommy Jernetta.

Jernetta had three kids and I was one of the three. My name is Terri. I grew up fast, started having kids before the age of 15. I had two beautiful children, Leon and Ariana. They'll never really know how Great Grandmama Laura was because she passed away on Oct.21,'06.

I have little memory of her, but everything I know is good. I remember going over to her house to see her. She didn't say much, but when she did, she was never talking to anyone in the house. I think she could only remember stuff from a long time ago before any of us were born. I think that my Grandma Annette was right when she said that great grandma had a reason for Alzheimer's!

Anyone would get Alzheimer's having to think for 11 children and two adults. The whole time I knew her she didn't know me. I remember things my grandma told me about great grandmama. She used to knit stuff. She mostly sewed quilts. In fact, I have a quilt she made. I've been taking good care of it, and when my daughter gets older, I'll give it to her and let her know just how important it is.

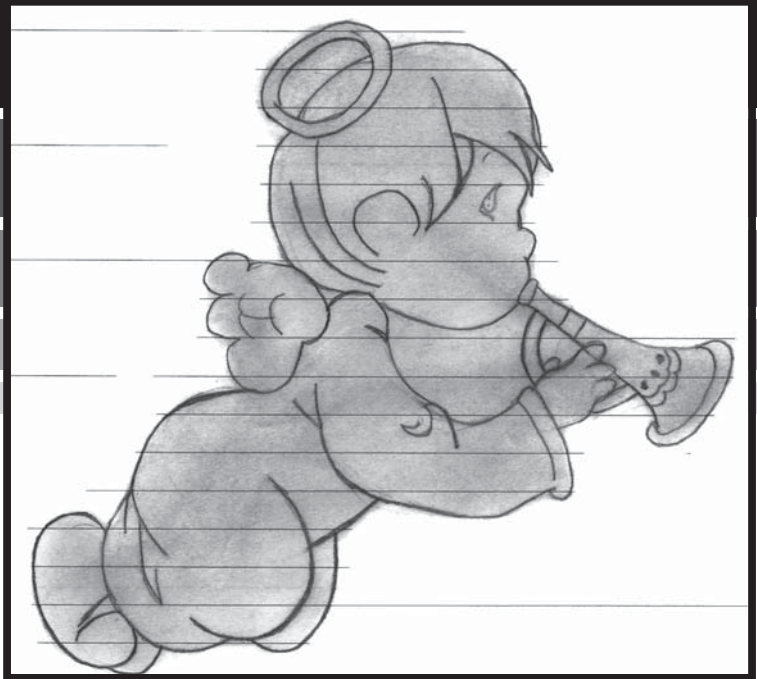
I also remember Aunt Penny taking a picture of me, my brother Karl, and Grandma. After Aunt Penny took the picture, Great Grandma Laura spit on my brother. I guess my brother was in shock because he was staring at the spit on him. My grandma cleaned him up and explained to us what had just happened. Great Grandma thought she was spitting out some snuff!

I remember Great Grandma sitting in front of the TV singing and talking. I don't know what she was talking about or singing about. All I know is she looked happy doing it. I remember when me, my brothers Karl, Da'wain, Brinetty and Darian would play in the back yard. We'd play basketball, tag, hide-n-seek, jump rope, and we'd pick the fruit off the trees in the back yard and eat them or throw them at each other. We used to get in trouble for that.

All I really know is I love my great grandma. She lived a full life to the age of 93. We love you Great Grandmama Laura! Rest In Peace. Some of us will see you when it's our time.

-LaRonda GU, SF/YGC

**From The Beat:** We don't usually hand out POWs to pieces that are basically R.I.P.s, but this one is so lovingly written, so full of respect, so detailed, that we had to give you one. Your remarkable great grandmother lived a long life and had the chance to see all her great grandchildren. It really must have been hard having to look out for eleven kids back in the days. She saw things that most of us have only heard about. We hope you live a long and productive life so that, one day, your own great grandchildren can write as lovingly about you as you have written about her.



## Nobody More Important Than You

What's up Beat Within? Hope y'all doing better than I am. I've been sitting here in B4. I finally got switched from B5 and I've been thinkin' about a lot of shhh lately. I have been thinkin' about the fact that a lot of us do the things that we do not for ourselves, but to impress some girl or impress your boys.

Y'all need to check up on yourself and start worrying about yourself, because when you think about it — but I mean really think about it — there is nobody more important than yourself in this world! Let's face it. Not your girl, not your boy, not your dog, not your brother, not even your mom! I know that this is very blunt and harsh thing to say, but like I said, if you've thought about this, then you know what I'm talking about. The only real reason you go on in this world with the same blood coursing through your veins that you were given when your beautiful mother gave you life is only for the sweet desire to live and make it to the end no matter when it is.

With this I hope a lot of you start handling business and get your life straight, if you're locked up or free. I have been given a new chance to go to a new drug- placement program so I can get my life straight and go home. So I hope that all of you guys at least take this into consideration.

-Aj B4, SF/YGC

**From The Beat:** Unless you wouldn't mind someone calling your beautiful mother the "b" word, please do not use it to describe females! It's insulting, offensive and perpetuates the stereotype that women are nothing more than objects for men! We know there are bad names you would not like to be called, so we want you to make that little extra effort to apply to others the same principles you would like applied to you and to those you love! But having said all that, we still want to applaud you for this very direct and down-to-earth message: You are the center of your universe, the most important person in it, and it's up to you to make it what you want. Making it "to the end" is a given, but how we make it there and when we get there is largely (though not entirely) up to each of us. Good for you for recognizing that, and for making the hard decision to change what you need to change to truly value yourself as that unique and most important individual! Good luck with your rehab... and all that follows.

After Aunt Penny took the picture, Great Grandma Laura spit on my brother.

## Refugee

I look in the mirror and I hate what I see.  
I break the mirror... smash and break it into little pieces.  
I want to get a sharp knife, look into my own life, kill things I don't like inside of me.  
Life is forever, but if I had a friend, in my depression I would have an umpire. I've been thinking, and thinking always gets me into trouble.  
But I have a split personality.  
It wasn't me, and now I'm a refugee, and everything inside of me is just a part of my disease. This new life has brought us this new knife.  
God save us. I put my pride up on the shelf.  
Confusion. Illusion. Revelation dead and bloated and all the pills wash it away. They tell me how and what to say.  
But there are still the few emotions we must fight.  
I need that numbness in me. I feel sick.  
My life is nothing you can play with. You should have learned.

-Kyle, Santa Cruz

**From The Beat:** Kyle, this is a revelation to us, too. You are a powerful writer and we feel a bit embarrassed that we didn't recognize this earlier. In a sense, all writers have a split personality, almost a whole other person with whom they communicate by paper and pen. Your situation sounds a little more serious than what we're talking about. Among many things we wonder about, we wonder this: do you feel just a little bit better after you've written out those thoughts of yours, the ones that sometimes get you in trouble. It's our theory that writing serves as a pressure valve, of sorts - that if you write out your thoughts, you have, in the process, released some of the pressure that builds up inside you. Do you find that to be true?

my mind is a jungle of it's own  
won't ever leave me alone  
it keeps playing games with me  
blurs my vision so i cannot see

## Answer My Prayers, Please

do you hear me when i talk to you  
do you hear me when i confess my sins  
do you hear me when i beg you for forgiveness  
bet you know how much stress i go through  
do you know i feel a hole in my chest  
do you know i feel i should be put to rest  
do you answer any of my prayers  
because if you do, can you help me  
i feel like i'm buried under layers  
my soul is hurt, my heart is burned  
the devil still ain't learned  
you are my savior, your love i need to earn  
because i sin all the time and i got to rewind  
press fast forward and start a new life  
because i need you and only you  
(from the one and only —)

-Savage, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** Perhaps earning your savior's love is something you do need to do, but it would only be to show your gratitude — because you are already forgiven! Your savior doesn't want to see you put to rest, far from it — God wants you to go on living and do your best to make right the wrongs you used to do in hiding and in plain sight. The devil will never learn, but when you return to innocence, the devil loses his turn. When you repent and start to do right, the devil is spurned. He can't win the fight unless you give in, but why would you go back to him since you're forgiven your former sins. Now, start to make amends, which simply means, do right, do good, show love to others as well as yourself whenever you can. Your prayers are already answered, if you'll just stop and listen.

i feel like i'm buried under layers  
my soul is hurt, my heart is burned  
the devil still ain't learned

## My Mind

no more words i let my actions speak  
i don't have the power my mind feels so weak  
i'm starting to lose control of it all  
it seems my mind can't grow in this hall  
they incarcerate me to insult my intelligence  
try to break me down with all their vengeance  
but it never seems to work  
all they do is make my family hurt  
my mind stays intact in this institution  
i don't let it get washed with all this pollution  
in some ways i feel it is way too complex  
like a movie with all these special effects  
but it's life so who is next  
babies having babies 'cause of unprotected sex  
the mind is a terrible thing to waste  
it can make horrible things have a wonderful taste  
create visions for your future to get over your past  
i'm trying so hard to make mine last  
they say wisdom comes with age  
mind grows with every turn of the page  
stop all this rage  
release me from my cage  
before it becomes too much  
blow up at the slightest touch  
my mind has no border  
it just piles up mounts of information like a manila folder  
they all look the same but are very unique  
have many things to offer like a boutique  
it's a struggle between mind and heart  
so close to a decision yet so far apart  
my mind is a jungle of it's own  
won't ever leave me alone  
it keeps playing games with me  
blurs my vision so i cannot see  
i slowly think i'm going crazy  
i can't let myself get lazy  
'cause what i got is one of a kind  
no one has my dangerous mind

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** Yes, yes, work hard to make your visions persist, and don't give in to a system of vengeance. What do you think makes you want to go off at the slightest touch? It's the brutalization of a mind assaulted by vengeful lust, even when it masquerades as something just. All the things of which you're accused, are used as excuses for further abuse, and the only way out of this vicious cycle is for you to break free from a vengeful bible. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, set a lower limit to evil but didn't make it the truth, which is to say, it's not a good but an evil way that speaks of cruelty with self-righteous praise. Of course it's better than a hundred for one, or wiping out a family for the loss of a son — yet still it fills up prisons and informs judicial decisions. Gandhi was of a mind, that if we practice an eye for an eye, we all will go blind. So don't let your rage at being confined so long in a cage turn you into the beast that you hate. Not punishment but replenishment, not incarceration but rehabilitation, not a guard's enmity but a counselor's amenity — these are putative guidelines of juvenile justice, but don't let bitterness undermine your readjustment. Be as dangerous as the truth, for villains hide in a lie for fear of reproof. Be powerful as forgiveness, for vengeance does not put an end to violence but begins it again and again — and thus the self-righteous critically sin. So don't let yourself get lazy and go as crazy as a system of retributive justice, but be dangerous as a loving heart — start to be just this: Big Vic, in whom wisdom resides, rage subsides, and visionary intelligence provides present peace of mind and a future that feels fine. Let your past become a history of mistakes defined and rejected in order that your future be protected and present serenity can be introjected despite residing in a system infected with hate. Late.



## Tried As An Adult

(Part 3)

So now we are at the courthouse and I got butterflies in my stomach. But I put it aside and maintain. The sheriff pulls into the well, which leads to under the courthouse. He drives down the little hill and makes a quick left into a parking lot. Then he puts the van into reverse and backs into another lot across from the one he first pulled into. He keeps reversing until he hits a ramp that we'll use when we exit the van. When he hits the ramp I hear a loud 'boom' and the ramp slides a little. He stops, puts the van in 'park', gets out and walks to the entrance to the tombs.

On the wall, there is this switch. The sheriff puts his key in and turns it. All of a sudden I hear a noise coming from in front of the van. I look through the windshield and see a big gate/cage coming down from the ceiling. I watch it until it hits the ground. Then I look back toward the sheriff and see that the door to the tombs is open and there are three sheriffs there. One of them walks up the ramp, unlocks the back doors, opens one and then the other. Then there is another set of doors. They're to the cage where the other juveniles (being tried as an adult), and I, will be locked into. The sheriff pulls a lever that opens the door on the side of the cage they'll enter. They come out, walk down the ramp, and are told to wait by the door. He then pulls the lever on my side of the cage and I am released. I get up and walk down the ramp and head toward the others who are lined up by the door.

I do a quick little stretch, because I was locked in that small cage in the van. We wait in line until told to do otherwise. Now the sheriff tells the others that we are juveniles and directs us into the tombs. We step into the entrance and now we are in this small concrete hallway, with two ways in.

The first is the entrance we walked in. The second is at the end of the small hallway, to the left. We walk to the door at the end and when we get there I step through and see another sheriff. He's grubbing on a doughnut and sipping his coffee. He says, "good morning gentlemen," with his mouth stuffed. Then he tells us to stay on the red line and

not to get off. So we do as we're told. He then directs us to walk down the red line to where other sheriffs are waiting to search us.

As we walk I begin to view my surroundings. I first look at the red line. It's about one and a half feet wide and it follows the base of a huge wall that rises to a high ceiling. I look up and see more red, because the lights in there are red. It makes the white walls glow red. But it's also pretty dark in there, because of their choice of light bulbs.

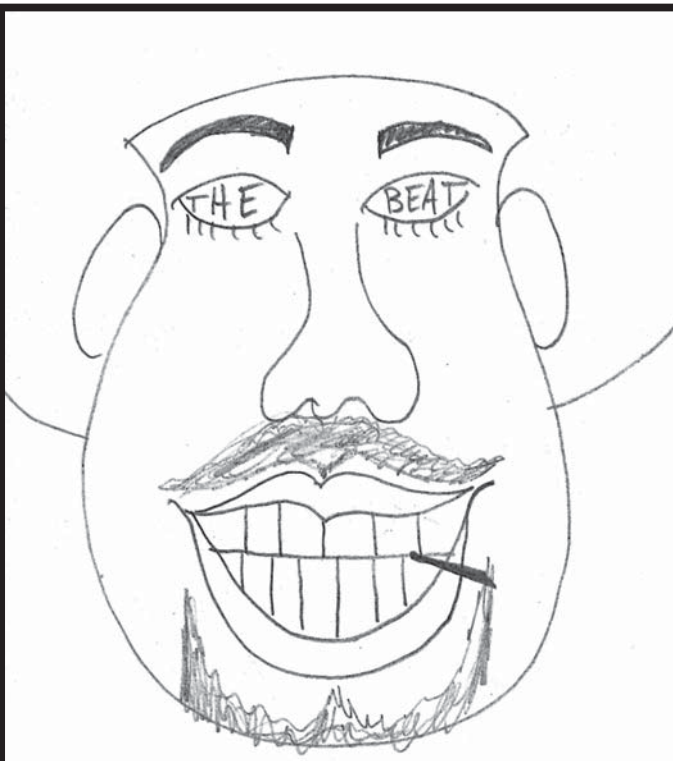
I then look to the end of this huge hallway and see about seven more sheriffs. They're slapping on some latex gloves. I take a quick glance to the left and see five doors that are an equal distance from each other. The doors are about ten feet across from the side of the hall we're walking on. Door 1 is for Southerners. Door 2 is for the Northerners. Door 3 is for females. Door 4 is for juveniles. Door 5 is for (I think, but I'm not sure) the people who don't bang, or people who are crazy in the head, and I think for people who are PC'd up. And in this place there are no windows, anywhere. While viewing my surroundings, I am interrupted by a voice that says, "stop right there and face the wall."

I look up and see this sheriff putting on his gloves. He's pretty big and he says again to face the wall. He points to it. So I stop and face the wall. As I do so I am told to extend my hands as far out as I can. I do it and he starts to search me. He starts off with my arms, then front to back, and as he goes for my legs, he grabs my balls, and I say, "Hey." He continues to search my legs and tells me to lift my right leg. I put my knuckles against the wall for support and lift my right leg. He takes off my shoe, hits it against the wall, looks in it and throws it to the ground. He then starts to feel my foot to look for weapons or contraband. He then directs me to lift my left foot. He does the same to it and tells me to put my shoes back on. After they're done searching the others, they say, "turn around and walk to Door 4."

To be continued...

**-Jesse, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat: Jesse, this is unrelenting. Your description is so exacting that we almost become you. This is a harrowing experience. You are doing a great job, letting all of us Bear readers know what it's like. We're waiting for the next installment, with a mix of eagerness and trepidation. Again, powerful writing!**



## Independence

I think independence means to be able to do things on your own,

like for example me learning how to live my own life instead of the courts and the system controlling my life like I have since I was fourteen years old.

I started messing with drugs and got caught by the cops with a syringe in my pocket and an empty seal in my wallet, from there the cops sent me to Durango then the next day the courts released me to CPS.

I didn't think anything of it so I kept on messing with more drugs until I was seventeen years old,

finally realizing what the hell I was doing to my life and I wanted to straighten up my life and I knew it would be the last chance

I had to straighten up or I would end up in prison or dead. So I am making my changes to better my life for my future.

That's what I think INDEPENDENCE is.

**-Daniel The Bird, Maricopa County, Arizona**

**From The Beat: Some kids see independence as the ability to do whatever they want any time they want to do it. And they may end up in jail where you are told when to take a shower, when to speak, when to eat, which is opposite of independence. It's funny but when you stay straight that's when you truly can be independent. Many people reach a certain point at which they decide to turn things around. We are glad this point has come for you now before the adult system got a hold of you.**

## What I Want My Words To Do To You

I want my words to touch you.  
 I want my words to make you cry.  
 I want them to wake up your mind to let you feel what I'm saying inside.  
 I want you to know what I'm feelin' deep down inside in the depths of my soul.  
 I want my words to knock you off yo' feet, to the point where you can't even speak because I'm telling you something.  
 Something strong, something real, something you will never forget  
 Something that will make you sweat.  
 I'm a young woman. A strong, depressed young woman.  
 I know things will get better. I know God will help me no matter how long it takes.  
 I want my words to pick you up and help you in life.  
 I want my words to cradle yo' mind, knock you down and make you weep.

This is what I want my words to do to you!

**-LaRonda GU, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** Very well put, LaRonda. We want your words to teach and we want your words be heard. That's the whole reason for the existence of The Beat, so go ahead and spit those words! And then let them pick you up, and help you in life. No writer could ask for more.

## To My Unborn Child

To my unborn child, I'm sorry for walking out on you like my parents did to me. The moment I knew you was in her belly, I was going 18 but scared to be a dad at a early age. To my unborn child I went back to juvie to get my life straight so I can be able to support us. I promise to change my life and quit thizzing and quit smoking cancer sticks, quit doing stuff that's gone send me back.

Sept. 5th was the day I lost you out my life for good. I failed you like a punk instead of taking care of my responsibility like a man. To my unborn child, I tried to drink, pop and smoke my pain away. I'm writing you this letter to try to ease the pain. I promise I'm not going to make the same mistakes. I promise to take care of your siblings when they're born. To my unborn child, I'm asking and hoping you will forgive me. I know I'll never forgive myself. I wasn't there when you were murdered, and every day I blame myself. Just know I did love you.

**-T-Time B2, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** This strong piece made us cry, TT. We don't know the circumstances of your baby's death (you used the term "murder," so we're not sure if you're talking about a real murder, which would also have taken the mother's life, or if you're talking about abortion which a majority of people would not consider to be murder), but we can feel the depth of your passion and your deep, deep remorse. We also appreciate the promises you make here to stop doing the things that led to your not being there when you were needed, and we hope you are able to keep them. If we have any advice to give you, it's to take on these promises one-by-one, and not attempt a complete make-over in one day! In other words, just keep that goal of being a responsible father in your head at all times, and you will find yourself moving towards that most important of all roles — a decent parent. We're sorry for your loss but happy for your gain (which is a new way of thinking).

To my unborn child, I'm asking and hoping you will forgive me. I know I'll never forgive myself.

## Why

I want to know why  
 People telling me they going to do something for me  
 But it never happens

I want to know why  
 I'm locked up and not with my family

I want to know why  
 people always got to talk to me behind my back but they  
 can't tell me  
 to my face

I want to know why  
 the courts try to throw the book at me and give me 20  
 years

I want to know why my family can't be there to support me

I want to now why  
 They got to give me twenty years so I can't see my family

I want to know why  
 my life got to be this way

I want to know why I did what I did to come here

I want to know why  
 My big sister never come to see me  
 but she do shhh for the rest of the world

I want to know why  
 People killing each other on the  
 Street of West Oakland and East Oakland

I want to know why  
 I got took away from my family  
 When I was 11 years old

I want to know why  
 I can't see my baby cousin grow  
 up to be something in her life

I want to know why  
 I can't see the daylight anymore

I want to know why  
 When you on the outs people are all good with you  
 But when you come to jail they forget all about you

I want to know why  
 I can't get out and be with my loved ones.

**- Lil' Man Man, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** We know that all these questions come straight from your heart. In a way each one is like a deep cut that hasn't healed yet, maybe that's why the poem feels so strong and true. If you try to answer these questions the same way, from the heart, it might help you figure some things out for yourself, and might help make you wiser and tougher for the challenges coming up in your life. So tell us, Lil' Man Man, why DID you do what you did to come here? And why DO people keep killing each other on these streets? We're waiting to hear your thoughts on this, and on everything else you bring up in this profound and moving piece.



## Change Begins In The Individual

Where do you see yourself years from now? When I was asked this question, my answer was, "I'm just trying to get through the day."

I think that's why some young kids like me are stuck in the halls, not moving forward in life, because we don't have anything to look forward to. We should be setting small goals for ourselves instead of living life, just trying to get through the day.

Change begins in the individual. Lately I've been thinking about my life and I want to change for the better. Almost everybody in my family has been involved in the system, and now I'm caught up in the system and I feel like I need to break the chain. I want something positive in my family tree. In my family, all they know is how to run, but I don't wanna be running from my problems all my life, so I decided to turn myself in this time and face my consequences.

**-Eli, Marin**

**From The Beat:** It can be really hard at first to direct your life in any way that no one in your family has ever gone, because messing up, running, and/or going to juvy or jail must seem normal to you. But you already know, from what you've written, that those are all dead ends. You've seen the bigger world, where some people don't mess up, do go to school, get work they enjoy or even love, accomplish many of their dreams, and never get involved in the justice system. When you step out of juvy, you can do pretty much whatever you want with the rest of your life. Do you have any examples of people who are living their dreams? What are your dreams? If you don't to live the life you're living, you can change it. You can be and the white sheep of the family instead of the black one. A good and happy life depends on your choices. What the next step? Good luck!

I just want to live life with a regular job, not doing crimes anymore. Also, I want to get my life straight before it's too late and I'm six feet deep.

## Stabbed In The Heart?

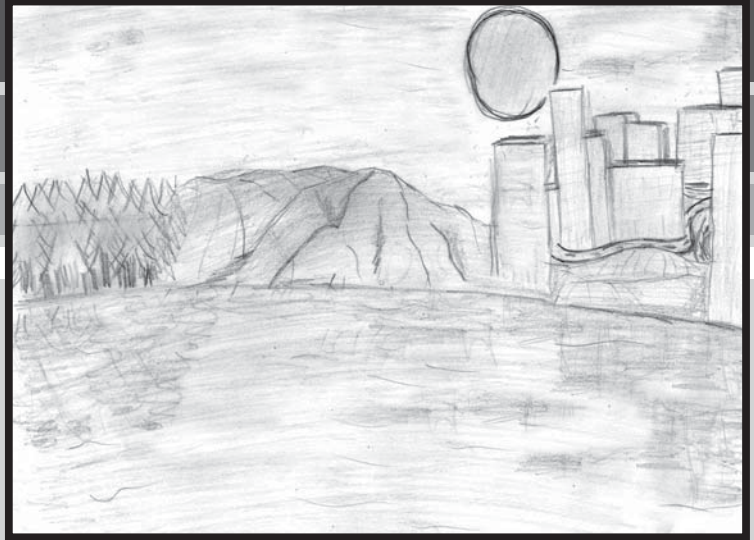
Well, it's not anything I did to anyone. It's that I miss my boyfriend, like crazy. I miss him terribly, right this moment, because one of our friends just overdosed on coke and meth. His kids found him. I'm holding in my tears because it's stabbing me in the heart, really painfully.

I wish I could be with the people I love and with the people who love me. I'm just going to cry myself to sleep.

Hopefully my boyfriend will pick up when I call him, around 7. It's hard to believe that my friend overdosed, because just two weeks ago I was in the hospital from an overdose. I thank God I'm alive. My prayers are out there for struggling addicts.

**-Hurt, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat:** Our prayers, too, are out there for all who struggle. Thank you for your heartfelt piece. We wish you and yours a healthy 2007!



## What's up?

What's up, Beat? How's life been treating you? I'm writing you from AlaCo (150) Juvenile Hall. I'm going to be writing about someone I thought I knew. This person was a very good friend of mine.

I had known this person for about four years now. I trusted him because he had my back when I had funk and never disrespected me — he knew I was a very loyal person to our side. He was also someone I looked up to, because he was a lot older than me.

The reason I say that I only thought I knew this person, is because he stole twenty-five thousand dollars from my grandpa, a leader in what I will call the organization. But the only person I can blame for it all, is myself — for trusting him and introducing him to the people I did business with! The only thing that matters to me, is that my grandpa isn't mad at me. Meanwhile, I know that I have to win back his trust in me.

However, I am planning on moving to a different state, because I no longer want to be apart of the organization. I am the youngest one in it, and I'm only in it because my grandpa is in it and he needs someone to take his spot when he dies. Anyway, that's how I saw it. But my mom don't want me to be a part of what my grandpa does, because she wants me to have my own life. I'm not saying that the organization is bad because most of the money that we make goes to good things. You feel me?

When I get out of here though, I'm going back to school to get my GED. Then I'm moving out of the state so I can live a normal life with my family that wants me to live a successful and productive life! Even though my grandpa a good guy, I just can't trust him because he will do anything for money. I've seen him do things to his own family that I will never forget, all because of money! I just want to live life with a regular job, not doing crimes anymore. Also, I want to get my life straight before it's too late and I'm six feet deep.

**-Loun, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You make so much sense here, it's almost scary, because we can feel the difficulty of the decision you're making. Nevertheless, we applaud for your decision, and we applaud your mother for loving you enough to speak from her heart. We think she's one hundred per cent correct! Also we understand your respect for your grandpa, the position he holds and the power he wields — and we understand your remorse for introducing someone you thought you knew but didn't, into your grandpa's life, because of what happened. We, too, hope your grandpa can see that you intended him no ill, even it it's too much to hope that he sees that family love is priceless and should be valued above money, always and forever. A regular job is a great idea! It's the nature of "the game" or "the organization" that money is the measure of all action — just as it's the nature of your mother to love you and want what's best for you. That you can now see clearly which road to take says a whole lot about how much sanity you've regained after getting caught up in that crazy life. Major props to you, Young Loon, uh, Loun.

I will do as much as possible  
for me to become a better  
person and make myself as  
useful as possible.

### Living When The Life You Know Is Taken Away

If I was sentenced for life in jail and was going to die, then I would try to redeem myself and my dignity. I would write books, give my opinion on situations and problems. I will do as much as possible for me to become a better person and make myself as useful as possible. I will do drawings and try to write dedicated pieces to the public eye to read and make them say, "Why is this genius in jail?"

The number one goal is for me to get caught by the public eye with my life and my real life situation.

The question is "Is it worth it? Will I try to run away?" Yes, I will because doing life in jail makes my loved ones cry and worried about me 24/7, seeing people go in and out of jail, having people tell you what to do forever, and never ever get your freedom back... I'll rather die as a man then live as a coward.

**-Kool Guy B4, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat: We really like that first paragraph, filled with examples of positive and productive things you can do, whether you're locked up or not. But your "solution" to keep your loved ones from crying and worrying about you by running away doesn't sound very effective. Running from jail or placement just means more and more running, and never dealing with reality. A far more effective strategy — in fact, the only effective strategy we can think of — is to change the things you do so that you never get sentenced to a long prison term in the first place!*

### Good and Bad

Good and bad aren't really different,  
But it's not the same either, that's what I meant  
Good is always free,  
Bad is behind a door and a key  
Good is faithfully,  
Bad's got the best of me.

Just 'cause I'm in Juvy doesn't make me bad,  
But still if I think I'm good, that would be sad.

What is good? And what is bad?

Those questions frustrate me and make me mad  
Being bad is not what you are, you have a choice.

If you're good speak up, and let people hear your voice. If you're bad, I feel sorry for you

But I can't make fun of you, 'cause I've been bad too.

**-Lil' Mental, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: Some of the worst sins have been committed by the people who were sure they were on the side of good. But human beings are a mixed bag, like you write here... and yeah, it's frustrating to try and understand the human soul in all its complexity... If a person does evil, does the person become evil? Can you ever make up for doing bad things? On the other hand, if a rich person profits from other people's suffering, but never actually hurts anyone directly, is that person innocent? In this poem you grapple with the questions of good and evil like a master — for better or for worse, the time you've spent in here has forced you to confront the darkest side of yourself — but you shine a light on it with your art, and with your vision. Like you say, "Being bad is not what you are, you have a choice"*

### Group Home Madness

I'm KK. I've been gone from the world for eight months now, in the deep country with old-ass white people for five months. I had to listen to these people tell me all kind of bs about how basically my culture is unacceptable. They took me from my family, friends, the block, and for five months I almost really snapped. I benefited because I got a lot of control of my anger, but they made people put a façade on like it was the best grouper in the world, and it wasn't.

I was pushed all day, every day for five months. Everybody with the exception of a few had the characteristics of everything I hated in a person, and I was forced to live with that shhh. I called it circumstantial imprisonment because if I ran I'd go back to the hall and they use that against you.

The real is I don't ever want to get caught up again. It didn't change me as a person, but it improved me as a young man. Trust that's real.

**-Kk B2, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat: This is a truly interesting piece of writing, KK. What we'd really like to know is what you mean, exactly, when you say they found your culture unacceptable. What do you mean by "your culture," and what specifically did they object to? (We're trying to picture these "old-ass white people" having to live in a group home directed by young-ass black people... How long do you think they'd last in that situation?) We're equally intrigued by your statement that you have emerged from this situation improved as a young man. In what ways?*

### Too Young

Was it true?

Or was it lust?

Was it you or was it me?

Was it love or again lust?

No one knows but me and you!

You said nothing but real talk

But little did I know it was lust.

Why would you do something so mean? You knew what you were doing to me. You actually hurt me, and this ain't no punk bezzy shhh. This is real talk! You put me through so much in the last past year! But I guess everything happens for a reason.

I put my life in these papers so everybody could know, but nobody really don't care. But I do! Not enough words could describe what you put me through. I am very young but feel older than what I am, but there's nothing nobody can't do and will do to make me go through this feeling again.

I hurt so much inside, but no one know how I feel but me. But I keep my head up, 'cause I do believe in myself. So keep praying on me 'cause you will not take me!

**-Lil' Miss Young GU, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat: You may think that you are the only one who can feel the pain you feel inside, but unfortunately this is not the case at all. If you pay close attention to other young women's life stories and how they spill their feelings and thoughts on paper (just like you), then you'd see how many feel just the same. You may also feel that you are the only one who believes in you, but — fortunately — that is also not true. We believe in you!*

I had to listen to these people  
tell me all kind of bs about  
how basically my culture is  
unacceptable.

## Freedom

my definition of freedom  
is a bird soaring high in the sky  
spreading its wings rapidly in the warm sky  
and soaring high in the sky to the point where  
it's body looks like a head of a pin  
too small for me to recognize what type it is  
freedom to me is also a person like oprah winfrey  
because she is one of the most powerful  
colored persons i have seen in years  
likewise to be the first black and woman president  
another type of freedom to me is something engaged  
and you need a key to unlock it  
otherwise it is stuck for the rest of its life  
and when you take the key and open the cage  
then its soul is released  
and it's able to take charge of it's own life  
and live and be free

-Web, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** We like the drawing of a bird in flight at the bottom of your written page! Flying through the boundless sky is a powerful image of freedom to someone engaged — and so is a key! Not to mention the power and wealth of an Oprah Winfrey. But when you say freedom is being able to take charge of your own life, are you ready to accept the need to live responsibly and do right? Otherwise it's like a baby bird kicked out the nest before it's ready to fly; it flaps its wings and falls no matter how hard it tries — 'cause metaphorically the mature wings of a man who wishes to fly high and free: consist of his commitment to do right and live responsibly. Without that commitment, he tumbles toward death or the penitentiary.

## Life

When I walk the streets  
I see fire, like hell.  
But when I see my family,  
it's like seeing a swan.  
Art is what I like to do when I'm bored,  
and justice is what I want.  
But everyone's in their own corner  
doing what they want to do.  
It feels like a fog is clouding my head  
with bad thoughts. My moods  
go up and down, like an elevator,  
which is probably how an orphan feels.  
When I see a bee, I see what God created.

-Julian, Santa Cruz

**From The Beat:** Your thoughts are buzzing all over the place, which we like, especially in a poem. We especially like that line about your moods being like an elevator. Keep writing Julian.

## Tired of These Bad Days

I'm tired of people telling me stuff I already know.  
Tired of things not goin' my way.  
Tired of everything that's not right.  
Tired of all these white presidents doin' all this  
nonsense.  
Tired of black people not realizing what they're doin'  
until it's too late.  
Tired of 5.0 talking shhh about people they don't  
know.  
I'm really tired of these bad days.  
I wish it was a dream, but it's real.

-Rj, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** It is real, and you're wise to notice it — and you know, all the important changes came from people who felt like you. Martin Luther King was tired of the way he got treated in the South, the first feminists were tired of not being allowed to vote, the followers of Che Guevara were tired of living in a world where they were exploited by the leaders. And some of the people that do the best at getting out of the system are the ones who are tired of losing their freedom.... you could be one of the next great black revolutionaries (or even president — if Barack Obama can do it, so can you!)

## Mad At Myself

i thought i knew you but i guess i was wrong  
you betrayed me, you messed me up  
i had plans for my future but you took them away  
you started messin' up, kickin' it  
with the homies was a daily thing to you  
from weed to more drugs you destroyed your life  
and therefore you destroyed mine  
i thought you would take care of me  
but i guess i was wrong, you got me locked up  
pero esta firme, 'cause i ain't mad at you  
i'll just make the best of it and move on with my life  
after all, how could i be mad at myself

-Dimples, 150 Crew

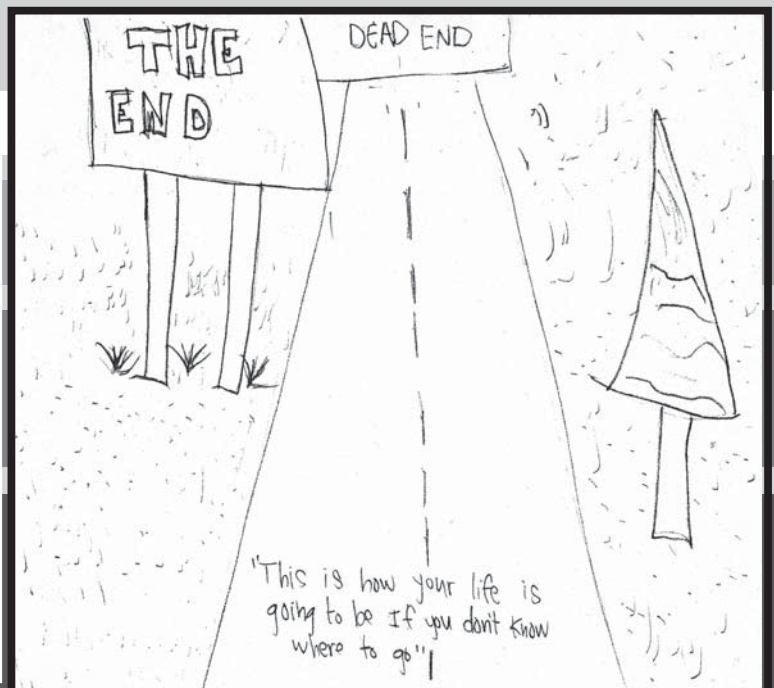
**From The Beat:** Things don't always work out the way you want them to, but you have a productive concept of the situation, which is to acknowledge the wrong but move on forward with doing what's right. Reaping the consequences of your past mistakes is enough pain, and beating yourself up about it won't help — in fact, it could set you up to go back to thugging and drugging 'cause you decide you're just not worth the effort to change — so you try to escape your pain in the same old dysfunctional way that put you where you are today. Nah, you just rejected that path. Good!

## In My Box

In my box I feel so lonely  
In my box reminisce the times I had wit' my family, my  
friends  
In my box I get high with anger  
But in my box I am safe where in the streets it's danger.  
But sometimes I feel I am a danger to myself  
because it's me in a box and nobody else.  
In my box you can't feel my pain  
Only four months in that box got me feelin' insane  
In my box I gotta make that change because time is of the  
essence  
'cause wit'out the car, gold, and clothes, it's a star in yo'  
presence  
In my box I think about life  
Lookin' at where I am it ain't nothing nice

-Ro-Bang B5, SF/YGC

**From The Beat:** To us, the best line in this fine poem is: "In my box I think about life." We wish more people would think about their lives, whether locked up or not. It sounds to us that you have not only used your time to think about things, but that those thoughts have led you to recognize how little time any of us has in life, and so it's time to make some changes in yours. Great!





## The Six Months Tank Was On the Run.

After leaving ROP, the six months I was out I did nothin' but grind, get money, and spend time with my females.

At the same time I was grindin', I didn't think that was enough money for me. So during this time I went looking for a job where you get paid under the table. I ran into this dude who was walking by Lowell Middle School. The only reason what made me approach him was 'cause this man had on a work uniform on and was in a work suit. So the man told me the job he was doin' had people working under the table so I assumed it was good.

The man brought me down to the place, cause where I had approach them he was walkin' down there. Anyway when I got to the place the man gave me his number and I gave him my cell phone number.

And he told me to call him in like an hour cause he was going to first talk to his boss to make sure it was cool for me to work. So at about three I waited and waited, after leaving the place thing I was going to work the next day. But four o'clock hit and the man didn't answer his phone, but the number was right cause the name he gave me was said on the voicemail. So I figured maybe something' came up. So I just waited for him to call.

I was hoping my grown female would get her lights and water out on, 'cause if not then I was going to stay with my sister. But she had a job, She was working as a nurse, but she had got fired, due to that he say/she say BS. but then I met this girl named Erica who was very attractive. The only bad about it was that she stay by Cole Middle school, which was by where my grown female stay. So I had to be lightweight under.

So then three months passed, and I was doin the same old, same old stuff, grindin, grindin, grinding, but when me and Erica got closer, I started bein' over her house more, cause she had light and water above. But see she stayed wit her mom. So I didn't really want to spend the night over her house, 'cause I figured one day her mom would come storming into the house, and then bust into her door when her mom was mad at her.

But to make a long story short I got a job at the baker factory in North Oakland. So when I'm finally having my money rate up I get caught!

So now I'm in Max Four waiting to go the Y for one year. All because I couldn't handle my behavior.

When I get out I will continue to play football and stay off the streets and clear away from parties -- 'cause I read in the article today that a young black male my age got killed goin' to a party. He was a football player for Oakland High. Actually he was Oakland High's star linebacker but now he's gone. RIP Andrew, you will be missed and always thought of, but I know you're in a better place. So I'll see you when my time is up.

**-Tank, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You know how they say "If at first you don't succeed, try try again." Well on this trip out you did try, and you did a lot right (looking for a job, hooking up with the bakery), and as for the stuff you did wrong (grinding, being on the run in the first place), in a way it's good that all that happened when you were still a minor, and your sentencing would be lighter. Because you've got all this ambition and talent and you want to do right... this time around, when you get out of the Y, you won't be on the run, so you'll be able to get a job without being limited by "under the table" options. Besides, during that year at the Y, you will have lot of time to read and write and improve your mind, so that when you get out you can also go to school... It won't be easy, but your nickname is Tank, and a tank can get through anything!

## My Life (In Poem Version)

As a young man, I grew up hard  
Living in a shelter, trying to be strong  
By the age, sleeping in a back seat  
Mom sacrificing food just so I can eat  
Walking in houses, finding weed plants  
All the players doing the weed dance  
Moving from Richmond to Marin City  
Small apartments in a tall building  
Walking to Longs, then got jumped  
I used to snitch; that got me beat up  
At age seven, started at Bayside Elementary; it was fine  
'Til I started fighting, then moms got my behind  
When age eleven, I went to the hall  
A little boy dat very small  
I thought it was fun, 'til they asked my father name  
And it's "unknown" brought stress, pain  
Then I started smoking blunts; wasn't nothing cool  
Running from the police; doin' the foo'  
Then started fighting more and more  
I even fought my mom back; I did enjoy that  
Now I'm older; a dummy, a fool  
It is because I didn't stay my butt in school  
Been to juvenile halls eight times  
Now I'm turning my life to Christ  
To end this poem; be strong  
Thirteen years old, on my way home.

**-Jayleon, Marin**

**From The Beat:** What a poem! You're very young to be living a uncontrollable life like this one. Instead of being in here, you should be getting your education. If you're this young and smart, that means that you belong to different places than this one. Listen to your mother and do the right thing bro'. Many people will depend on you in the future, so don't waste your life.

I read in the article today that a young black male my age got killed goin' to a party. He was a football player for Oakland High

## Wondering And Thinking

Man, I'm happy that I have the support of my homies here at the Ranch, because I don't know what I would do here, but I'm hanging in there, getting a lot of thinking done and working on myself a lot. I talk to myself and ask myself, "Ain't you tired of having to get to bed at 9:00 every night?" And, "Ain't you tired of not seeing any girls when you feel like it?" But I answer myself by saying, "You gotta do something about it." And the answer is, "Change your ways and the way you live, Moe Beezy." I say to myself, "You have a very supportive family at home and they love you and need you at home with them."

I have a little brother growing up, and I know he needs me to tell him wrong from right, and look where I'm at, away from him, and wondering how is he doin'. But I always talk to him over the phone and I tell him how much I can, and I hope he's listening and stay away from trouble. But I'm done and I'll be home to prove myself to the world that Moe Beezy's not coming back to jail, away from his family.

**-Moe Beezy LCRS, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** That sounds so good. Sometimes it takes the shock of being at the Ranch for months before you can finally say to yourself, "This life I'm living isn't working," and figure out what you have to do to change it. It hurts even more when you realize your little brother may hear what you tell him over the phone, but still, over the years he sees what you're doing and you can't control the lessons he's learning from watching you. You're right, your family needs you and your freedom needs you, and you need them.

Congratulations

look what you won  
you staring down the barrel of a automatic gun  
that gangsta life ain't fun  
you say you bang this  
and you say you bang that  
where yo' squad was at  
when you got beat wit' a bat  
see you need to stop 'fore you die  
i can tell you ain't solid  
by the look in your eye  
this life ain't real  
everybody try to live it  
but why do what the next man do  
stop being fake and be you  
'cause you really don't want  
all the stress and troubles

**-Lil' Eli, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You seemed to think we intended disrespect when you we told you this poem would work best if you're looking into a mirror and staring into your own eyes when you hear it — but that's because you were trying to disrespect someone else. Really there's a lot of truth here, but it's only useful when you tell it to yourself. Like you say, "[T]his life ain't real." It promises you riches and gives you a raw deal.

## Me and My Wife

Man, when I get out, me and my wife are out of here, on momas. Every time I come to jail, she's out there by herself, while I'm away, thinking about her, wondering what she is doin', and is she holdin' me down. I have been with her for about three-and-a-half-years, and she been there for me through this jail life. She writes me every day that I'm here. I talk to her on the phone every chance I get, and I say to myself that." This is where I draw the line," because by the time I leave here, I'm about to be eighteen and I love life too much to go some place else and have to stay for a long time, so I say to myself, "I'm done with the life I live," and "I'm starting something new for myself and my family and wife." I love family and my wife. I'm done. Love you, Baby Girl.

**-Moe Beezy LCRS, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** You can do it, that is if you are a real leader and not a follower! You're bright, creative, full of life, and have a good heart. You sound like you already know that any life in the streets will be ultimately dead end. Don't be afraid to leave the streets behind and try something, anything new. Throughout life we all have to put ourselves out there into lives that are unfamiliar to us, and everyone understands that. So don't be shy to ask for a job when you have little or no experience—if some kind of work appeals to you—tell the employer why you want to work there and what you're willing to do to prove that you'll be a good worker. Then work your backside off and do a good job. We wish you luck.

## Stay Away

What it do, Beat? It ya boy, Moe Beezy, holdin' it down out here in the Ranch, tryin' to get back to the house with the family. But ever y Sunday, when I see my family, I hate to see them leave because I hate myself for leaving them and not being able to leave with her. But on momas, I'm never leaving my family and girlfriend again--that's why I'm here on a time out--to get my mind right and think to myself about the changes I'm gone make, to stay out of places like this. I hate this life an' the way I keep coming to jail. I'm done with coming back. Moe Beezy out.

**-Moe Beezy LCRS, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** You must be tight with your mom in that you can feel her pain each time she leaves after visiting you on Family Day down at the Ranch, Moe Beez. Unfortunately, seeing her that way just adds to your pain. Maybe, when you're free again, the memory of her face full of sorrow will be enough to keep you cool and out of any mess on the outs. Whatever works, right?

Dear Mom And Grandmother

Man, I love y'all, because y'all are really there for me, no matter what I do. But it seems like I'm hurting y'all, because I keep going to jail and running from group homes and think, matter a fact, I know, I'm hurting y'all, because I got so much love at home and I'm leaving it.

I'm about to be eighteen and I'm done with coming to jail. Every night I think of different ways to stay out of jail and things to stay away from, and I know my problems and now I realize it, because I'm focused on life, and I hate being away from my mom and grandmother. I love them more than anything in the world, and I'm gone show them when I get out that I can stay out with them and never go back to jail. Now I'm gone be there for there for them and show them their love back.

**-Moe Beezy LCRS, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** Sounds so terrific. It's great that you appreciate your family so much. You can keep your freedom if you consider it precious enough to defend. Does your determination to change your life mean that you need work in the world beyond the streets? If so, what kind of work appeals to you? Do you need help establishing a job in that world? If so, can your counselors, family, friends help you get that job?

**I'm done with the life I live," and "I'm starting something new for myself and my family and wife**

## Time's Wasting

Time just wastes away  
while I sit here day by day  
doing the same things every day,  
never changing even the things we say.  
Life stays the same and never gets better  
in juvv.

Take it from me –  
get out of the system  
or I'll most likely see you in prison.

Hey, I know where I'm going,  
but do you?

**Make your choice now!**  
**I did!**

Words from a broken soul,

**-Speedy L, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat: If yur soul is broken, the smart thing to do is mend it. You strike us as smart, for sure. So, we urge you to start working on the repairs. Try imagining what you might accomplish if you focused your mental gifts on a project. Imagine yourself in a good place, not in a prison. Imagine what you will have to do to be in that good place. Start doing it.**

## Focused

What it do, Beat? It's ya boy, Moe Beezy, at the Ranch, holdin' it down, doin' my time, waiting until I get up out of here, back to my family and my girlfriend. Because while I'm up here, I think about her hella much and I'm trying to ask myself what I'm going to do when I get out to stay with her and never leave her and my family. But I told myself that I'm going to stay away from things that can get me in trouble and get a job and try to get my life straight.

But to everybody up in there, y'all stay up and hold it down--and everybody else, do y'all time and stay out of jail. Moe Beezy out. Get money!

**-Moe Beezy LCRS, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** It sounds all good, but when you write "Get money," we wonder. Often that means the writer intends to head right back to the streets because the call of easy money is so loud, alluring, and so hard to resist. Have you made up your mind that the all the money you earn in the future will be honest and legal—from a legitimate job? If not, what will keep you from getting busted again and bounced right back into juvy, the Ranch, or worse?

Thought I Knew You

You were my idol, the one I wanted to be. You were my guardian, the one who saved me.

I thought I knew you, but then you changed. I thought I would be you, but you're not the same. You're my bro through thick and thin. You had my back. I thought I knew you as a new man, but you lied again. I should have known you'd never change.

You've got an addiction, better yet, a disease. It's not your fault. You tried to change. I respect you for that.

I thought I knew you, but... I really don't know me. Yeah, you and I – we're alike. I get the facts, and it's not all right. I've got the disease too, but we'll survive. Peace out.

**-Jon, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat: Jon, what will you do? How will you 'survive'? Are you seeking help? It sounds to us like you do need help. Are you willing to accept it?**

## I Don't Know Where I'm Heading

To be honest, I don't know where I'm heading. I been sitting here almost four months, and I still don't know where I'm going. My PO been telling me about going to YA, but that doesn't mean nothing because the judge is the one who make the call. All I can do is pray to God and hope for the best because God ain't gone put you in a situation that you can't handle. He only put us in situations to better ourselves.

But the whole time I been here I been thinking about what I really want to do in my life. I'm confused. I ain't gonna lie because my heart be telling me something good but then I do the opposite. All right Beat, I'm out.

-Lgb B2, SF/YGC

**From The Beat:** One thing we admire about everything you write, LG, is how honest you are. Admitting that you don't know where your life will take you (both in the short-term, as far as your placement is concerned, and in the long-term, as far as your entire life is concerned) is an example of that honesty. So, let us tell you a couple of things. First, that short-term concern (where you'll be placed) is one of those things over which you have no control, so it's best to worry as little about it as possible and deal with whatever comes. But the long-term concern is one that every single person feels, and especially at your age. There is no reason why you should have a detailed blueprint of your life. As you grow, as you are exposed to new things and new ideas, your mind will change many times about what you want to be and how you want to get there. While that kind of uncertainty about the future is definitely unsettling (and we can tell that you are unsettled), it is not a reason to panic but to acknowledge you are on a journey (which, at the beginning seems long but near the end seems much too short), and while you can direct your steps (and we know you will), you can't predict what's around the next corner. Just keep doing what you're doing — praying, making yourself stronger, examining yourself and your environment, and writing!

## It's Hard

Living when the life you know is taken away is hard. It's hard to be away from home for a long time, not bein' able to hold your girl you love so much and be able to be home for the holidays and not make your family suffer. It's hard having to watch your mother cry her heart out as she watches her son be carried away in chains and cuffs and not bein' able to do anything about it, or when your girl sitting in the hospital six months pregnant and bein' able to see your first-born child until he is two years old. How do you feel when your life that you live is taken away and you're trapped looking at four walls, a toilet bowl and a sink.

**-Huey B5, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** You've done a good job of describing the hardship of being taken out of your home and community and put in a box to answer to a bunch of strangers. Yes, it is hard. But in a way, you weren't "taken" as much as you handed yourself over to that system by doing whatever it was that gave the system power over your life. At that moment, what you did was more important to you than your girl, your mother or your baby son... You made all of them second to your own desires, and now you are paying the price and regretting it. When you regain your freedom, remember what's truly important in your life!

# My Definition Of Freedom

My definition of freedom is a precious thing that you won't know until its gone and taken from you. Now that I am locked up and know that, when I get out I'm going to treat it as precious as possible 'cause a young black male gets all caught in the system and the white man thrives on that just so they pockets can get fat.

That's why when I get second chance, I'm never coming back to this shhh-hole. Hopefully the system can give a young brother a second chance to do good and stop the white man from getting money from me. Freedom is so special to me now I will do any thing to get it back.

So always think about your consequences if you could and think about where your life is headed.

**-Harold B2, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** Yes, thinking about consequences is absolutely essential if you want to avoid this place. But what else will you change when you get that chance you want to badly? One thing we know for sure: you will get out of here. What we don't know is whether the lessons you have learned here will be enough to keep you out. That question can only be answered by you.

# Freedom

My definition of freedom is when I can talk when I want to. To be able to go in and out of my room as I please. To be able to eat when I want and get seconds, maybe even thirds. To be able to wear my own clothes, drawers, and socks. When I don't have to wait 'til Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday to call ma folks. That's my definition of freedom.

**-Young Ant B1, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** Yes, being incarcerated has curbed your freedom, Young Ant. But what about when you're on the outs? Do you feel free out there? How are you free or not completely free in your real life? Does (should) freedom have any limits? What?

## Why Hate If You Don't Like To Be Hated On

Some people up in YGC like hating on people an' I be hot because I can't stand haters. It's not good to hate. I was gone hop on this one hater's line, but I'm trying to get out next week, me and my brother gone get out next week.

Yeah, like I'm saying, why hate on people and know you can't like to be hated on? I don't get it. Look, you know how he like hating somebody done hated on him, and now he knows how he feels when he was hating. Don't nobody hate on me because I don't hate on nobody else. What for? Ain't no need for hating up in YGC.

**-Hotboy B2, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** We're proud of you for not hating on anyone, but there's not a lot you can do about others who are haters. That's just the way some people are! Even when there's "no need for hating," it doesn't matter to some people. Do you have any suggestions about how we could re-educate people not to hate?

# Digging Deep

My definition of freedom is bringin' peace to all. By stopping the beef, I can start to live free within myself. I believe to be free and live that you, you have to dig deep within yourself and become positive that you want to walk right and become free. And that is how you become free by me. And if you need help, call me...

**-Dubb B5, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** We like the goal, Dubb, but we don't see how you're planning to reach that goal. What will you do to bring peace to your community and to your own life? Have you done that deep digging you advocate here? Are you positive you want to walk right? If so, what changes will this path require you to make?



## My Definition

My definition of freedom is doing what you like to do without people or authority telling you what to do. Freedom is not prison. Freedom is having fun and trying not to get in trouble.

**-Julian, Santa Cruz**

*From The Beat: So, you've learned how not to do things, if you want to be free. Or have you learned it? Are you confident that you won't repeat the behavior that got you in here? Do you have people who will support your efforts to change? Be thinking about a good team of friends and family who will help.*

## Why I Feel Like Staff Be Watching Me?

why i feel like these staff be watching me  
when i take a shower, when i brush my teeth  
man i can't take it no more, can't break it no more  
i be feeling violated like i'm some type of whore  
i gotta let my past go, i gotta let shhh go  
i get so mad sometimes i just want to say fluck everything  
but i can't 'cause living my life is my biggest dream  
i feel tears fall out my eyes like a river  
i look up to god and ask him to hold onto me  
i try to hold back but my heart just screams  
i been through so much sometimes i think i'm living a  
fake-ash dream where all i want, all i need, is to just be me  
and smoke my good stuff, for now go smart, next week  
— go dummy — fast like a taz car:

**-Savage, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: Several hundred years ago a famous British philosopher thought he'd invented the perfect prison. He called it the Panopticon, which basically meant that every prisoner could be watched at any or at all times. His idea was that if the prisoner felt as if he was being observed, it would make him behave better. It was a terrible idea for the very reason you state here, prisoners felt violated, which did not make them feel or behave better. Of course it makes you mad sometimes, but if you don't do anything stupid behind that feeling, it will pass without making things worse. Along with asking God to hold you at such moments, until the rage passes, you might try The Serenity Prayer: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." And remember that sometimes you're doing a lot better than you're feeling! Also you don't need smoke for the good stuff — you just need to set your mind free when you have the opportunity. Just let the thoughts go, flow, don't grab ahold with fear or anger, and they begin to lose their power to linger.*

## Messing Up A Good Life

My life has changed so much that I might not be able to go back to "normality" of my life. I will be able to go home very soon, but my family life is almost non-existent. Most of my family shunned me and labeled me "nothing." My dad told me not to ever contact him ever, and my mom doesn't know where she stands with me.

I had a good life before this. I had a loving home, went to an all-right school, there was always food to eat, a good bed to sleep, decent clothes on my back. Even when my mom couldn't get what I wanted, eventually she got it for me. Man I mostly destroyed my chance of ever having a good life again. I could've went on with life, but I had to throw that away for a label that most likely will stick to me for a very, very long time.

**-Marc B4, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat: Don't be so hard on yourself. From the way you put it, your mother is full of love for you, even if some of it may be tough love. You don't make it clear what you did to mess up the comfortable life you had, but whatever it was, it doesn't define who you are or who you can be. The labels that others put on you change when you start living up to your own, more positive labels. In other words, even if the reputation you've got in your family lasts for a "very, very long time" (and you will have to endure the pain of that distrust), the time it lasts will be determined by how you live your life from this point on. When people see an honest and sincere change in you, they will make honest and sincere changes in how they judge you. It may not happen tomorrow, but if you keep to your commitment to do things differently, it will happen.*

## Freedom... Oh Boy!

Freedom, freedom... Man, every young or old person would want freedom, if they locked up or on the outs. They would wanna stay out either on the block or the streets, or just in the house wit' cho bezzz chillin', smokin' blunts after blunts wit' gold fronts, ya heard.

But shhh, I'll give up anything in the world to have ma freedom back, and when I say anything I mean anything! I don't get how people could do life for hella years after killin' somebody or attempting to smoke somebody, but I know one thing: if I ever kill somebody, I'm fa sho' not go' get caught, and I'm go think about the consequences twice before I do what I'm go do.

But if you know me, I'm 'bout my shhh, feel me. But some young dumb-ass ninjas don't give a damn about they freedom 'cause they ain't really got nothin' to live for, or they was just born and raised like that, but if you got money the homies, family, or girls most important you go live.

**-Al-Bundy B5, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat: We applaud every line in this piece, except the one that begins: "If I ever kill somebody..." We can assure you, Al, that every person facing the death penalty (about 3,000 in this country!) thought he would not get caught. Before the crime, each one would have said just what you did, "I'm fa sho' not go' get caught." But they were wrong. There's only one sure way not to get caught for murder, and that's not to commit it! We hope you're serious when you say you'll do anything to get your freedom back, because you already know what you need to do not to lose it once you get it back. So, your own future behavior will tell us how truthful these words are. We believe you, but we also know that actions speak volumes...*

## Not Sure I Know You

I thought I knew you but I guess I was wrong. You said you was my big bra and you would never let me go down, and you would be there in my time of need. Once again I was wrong.

I'm locked up because of you, man! I never thought I would see this day. We was like the closest thing to peanut butter and jelly, and when you seen them pick me up, you just stood there like you didn't know the deal, Ninja. Now I feel you a punk for that, but it's good. When I get out one of these days, I just know not to hang out with fake ninjas 'cause, Ninja, I would do anything for you and you know that. That is all over. I just want to get out an' go on with my life, and never see the inside of any correctional facility in my life.

**-Marvin B2, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat: You've learned a very valuable lesson, but at a very high price. You say that when you get out, you won't hang with "fake" people, but how do you know they're fake until they do something like what your so-called homie did? You thought he was the real thing, but you were disappointed. So it's pretty much a dead-end to point your finger at him without, at the same time, taking responsibility for your own part. In other words, if peanut butter wasn't hanging with jelly, then it wouldn't matter what jelly did, it couldn't get peanut butter in trouble...*

## You Were Me

I thought I knew you  
I thought i knew you but you were me.  
I was trying ' to run but was already free.  
I looked in the mirror and I couldn't see.  
I thought I knew you but you were me.  
Why would you lie and say you got away.  
I thought I knew you but not today.  
You tried to hide like you were me.  
But that's just it you can't see!  
Maybe you're blind or just plain dumb  
You thought you knew but I'm the bomb.  
So you thought you knew me and that's OK  
I may know you tomorrow, but don't know you today.

**-Andre, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: We spent a lot of time thinking about this terrific, murky poem, there are so many ways to interpret it. We decided to read it as a dialogue between you and you — about the ways we don't always know ourselves. Did we get it right, or even more to this poem that we've missed?*

## My Life

I think if I was locked up with life I would try to redeem myself — pray to God every day to free my sins. Then I might hang myself if I was in that position. But I know that won't happen because I'm tired of this street thing.

I'm more interested in going to college and starting my own business because I'm not gonna waste my life for someone else's decision or some of my boys' enemies. I'm going to make smarter decisions for myself and my future. I learned to respect my life and others' life. Life is precious.

**-Lifer B4, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** So you'd ask God to forgive your sins and then you'd commit the worst sin of all — suicide! No, that won't happen! It appears you've really changed your thinking (which is the most important thing to change), and we want to applaud the changes! Before you go to college, you have to finish high school. What do you want to study in college? What kind of business do you want to own?

## No Definition Of Freedom

Freedom don't have a definition 'cause you don't know how your freedom is until is taken away. Every person has a different freedom 'cause we all have different lives. When a person have freedom, he don't really care about it. But when you don't have it you wish to get it.

**-Victor B4. SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** This is a very creative way to answer this question, Victor, and we agree that each person's freedom is different. What happens when two people's freedoms collide? Can one person have freedom at the expense of another person's freedom?

## Thoughts And More Thoughts

While I don't think I would never be able to picture myself going through prison because I would probably be so frustrated that I would go in to a state of mind were I would most likely kill someone or myself. I would feel like I have nothing to live for. At the same time I would try to stay on top of the black community, and stuff going on with the government to keep my sanity. At the same time, I am disabled, so I think I would be taken advantage of.

**-Skindo B2, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat: We don't know what your "disability" is, but it certainly doesn't affect your brain... Nothing disabled about that! We understand why you think you'd want to die if you ever had to go to prison (especially for a long time), but experience tells us that in almost all cases, life is precious, even when you're living it inside a cell! But the real response to your concern is to find a way never to come back to a place like this. and then you won't have to worry about it.**

## Feeling Down

Feelings are something, or a person who is feeling bad.

When someone talks bad about you, it hurts your feelings if you know they wrong. You want to fight, kill and even hurt them, but that's not right. The only thing you can do is pay or talk to a doctor about it. Right now I'm in jail for some dumb ass shhh and I'm feeling down cause I left my family.

All along my family is dropping like flies and I don't know how to take the pain. I promised myself I'm not coming back to this place, I do got family who care about me, and I'm staying in jail like a dumb ass kid. I'm going to wake up and smell the coffee. I'm sorry about who I hurt. I try to turn my life to God.

God please help me I'm feeling down. Please God I'm ready.

**-Gecorey, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** We can't help but believe that if there is a God, he will hear your anguished prayer, and hear your desire for a better world, a better life, and a better chance for yourself. The only way to take that pain is just to keep doing what you're doing: write, think, focus on your hope, focus on your dreams, and tell us what that new coffee smells like!

## Forgetting About Lock-Up

Why do I stay getting locked up? I know why, because I'm always tryin' to run through somebody's pockets or mess with somebody. Really, what it is is just when you get released, you ready to go to school and do what you got to do.

For a while, you do what you got to do, but you get too comfortable and forget you ever got locked up, and go back to your old ways. I don't know if that's true for everybody who came in and got out, but I feel that's how it is for me. But now I'm about to do my shhh, stay out, and live the life I could live... Peace.

**-Pancho B1, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** We think you've described how it is for most people, Pancho. The effects of being locked up only last a short time before responsibility falls back into your own lap and requires self-control and discipline. Yes, it is very easy to forget, which is why one of the definitions of maturity is the ability to consider consequences, and act accordingly. Maybe you need to substitute something else for that fear factor that the hall is supposed to represent, and instead strengthen your own moral code and set of principles to live by, so it won't be fear that keeps you from doing dumb stuff, it will be what you stand for and who you are.

# Freedom

My definition of freedom is not being locked up and told when to use the bathroom and shower. Freedom is being able to walk down the street without the neighborhood police harassing you every day. Freedom is not being characterized and judged as a different person from being different than a civilian.

The life I live is not freedom. Every chance I try to get a taste of freedom the system screws me over. So that's why I know about the difference between not being able to be free and not being free.

**-Slim B2, SF/YGC**

**From The Boat:** We agree with your definition of what freedom is not. It is not being here, locked up and answering to a bunch of strangers. But we wish you'd spend more time thinking about what freedom means when you're not in here. How can you exercise your freedom without damaging someone else's freedom? If you take someone else's property or hurt them in some way, aren't you saying that your freedom is more important than their freedom? How do you justify this?

## Wanting You Close

You know I got love for you lil' mama  
But lately the peak of my life has just been drama  
I really can't tell you why my life  
Has turned out this way, but I can tell you I'm missing  
you more and  
more every day.

Holding your warm body, kissing your neck softly  
Between those satin sheets having our own VIP party  
Just by me saying this puts a bulge in my pants  
Making love to your mind body and soul

While we dance our special dance  
Sometimes I feel like I'm letting this cold world get the  
best of me.

But all along I'm yearning for your warm body next to me.

Wanting you close and needing you near  
You screaming my name and me pulling your hair.  
Some might call me a freak, most call me a lover.

but they'll never know  
until we get under the covers.

**-Lil' D. 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Some call you a ladies man/we'd call you a poet/we'd say it again but you already know it/love poems are one way to use your skills/but we think you could use them give other thrills/a poem about peace, or fire or war/your dreams for the future, and even more.

*Do What You Like*

Freedom is being able to do what you want to do when you want to do it, without bad consequences for everything. It's being able to talk when you want to talk and being able to run when you want to run. It's being able to eat when you want to eat. These are all examples of freedom. I have none.

**-M, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat:** Ah, but you do have some. You have the freedom to write about your relative lack of freedom. We suggest you use this freedom to make a game plan for yourself. Write down what you'll do differently when you get your other freedoms back.

*I Thought You Knew*

I thought you knew I'm in it to win.

I got no time to lose.

I gotta handle my business, so I do what I do. I try to stay out of jail, but I'm stuck in these shoes, doing time in a cell, waiting on mail. No coming back.

**-Minor One, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat:** And what, exactly, do you mean by "win". How will you know when you've won? How will we know? By the way, you sling words well.

*Locked Away*

Life is messed up when you can't go home.

You locked away far from home...

you messed up and got caught doin' dirt  
Now you're freedom is gone and you ain't goin' home.

The life you knew is taken away, so stay up and out of trouble.

**-Dw, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** This is a hard lesson to learn ... we know it's been painful for you, but in a way we're grateful that you're discovering it now, when you're only catching Juvenile time. You aren't going home for a while - but that time will pass quicker than you think, and hopefully you will return a wiser and stronger person?

*Be A Champion*

I thought I knew you, but I really didn't.

I thought you were too smart to put yourself through this much pain.

Why do you always surrender to temptation?

I thought I knew you.

One thing I do know is that you are strong.

You are a leader.

You are born to be a champion.

So step up.

**-Manny, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** We hope you mean these words - we hope you tell them to yourself every day. Most of all, we hope you believe them from the bottom of your heart.

*What Is Your Definition Of Freedom*

My definition of freedom is doing what you want.

Having your own things. Being a free man.

Making your own life up.

Freedom is going where you want.

Things can stop a free man making life better for yourself.

**-Donzale, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** We love your definition as "making your own life up", that is so perfectly simple and wonderful.

*Living When The Life You Know Is Taken Away From You*

Well, right now, the life I'm used to has been taken away from me. Right now I'm just here at juvenile hall waiting to go wherever they're going to send me. I don't really know what's going to happen to me, and I don't know how long I'm going to get. I just hope I get out soon.

I'm probably going to YA and I might have to max out, but I hope not. I guess I got lucky for getting a juvenile disposition, and avoiding prison time. But now they're trying to max me out in YA. That could be ten years and that isn't cool.

I should be with my family right now. So wish me luck on my coming sentencing. I'm out.

**-Big D, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat:** We do wish you good luck. We're also hoping that you've learned a very powerful lesson. Do you know why you did what you did? What if, by some odd bit of luck, you were given another chance? Are you ready to be free, and to do what you have to do to stay free? The people who decide your fate need to know these things. How can you convince them that you deserve a second chance, or at least, a minimal sentence? You'd better know the answer to that question.

*Survival*

LM- What's up The Beat?

BW- What's up, what's on your mind tonight?

LM- Just like, feel me, where are my patna's at, what's going on on the streets, what am I missing?

BW- Is there a lot of drama and violence out there these days?

LM- Yup I think the reason is people don't have respect for each other these days. People be hating on each other these days. People be hating on each other. They don't like to see others shine.

BW- What's the reason, in your opinion, for this lack of respect?

LM- People want to be the only one's getting it out there on the streets.

BW- Is this because there isn't enough to go around or because people THINK There's not enough to go around?

LM- I know where I'm at. Everybody can eat, there's enough to go around.

BW- So it's about glory and fame? Less than money and survival?

LM- It's about money and survival.

BW- Do you hate on others who are doing well?

LM- No but I don't like it when people come from other spots to our spot and try to short stop.

BW- What can you do to settle it peacefully and guarantee your survival?

LM- That's a hard question... I can't answer. You can never guarantee survival.

BW- So what can you do?

LM- Eat like hungry eating, money wise eating.

BW- What good is that?

LM- I get to shine.

BW- Is it worth it to end up in here? To get hurt or stress your family?

LM- It's not worth it but we gotta do what we gotta do.

BW- I wish that weren't true. Do you?

LM- Yup. I wish money just grew on trees.

**-Lil' Mikey, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** The game, just like the rest of life, is full of contradictions. We hope you stay safe out there! Thanks for sharing your thoughts.

*Stabbed*

when i got stabbed

my life changed

because all the time i walk

i have to be watching my back

**-Cisco, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** That feeling will never go away, but you can still choose a safer way to live your life than posting on the block waiting to ride. Finish your education, get a j-o-b and stop dressing like a banging G flaunting his color for all to see.



## What Is Your Definition Of Freedom?

Being free  
Is not stuck in a room  
People telling you what to do  
That's not being free  
You have to raise your hand  
For permission to get up  
Being free is when you're having fun  
Being free is  
You're not in a room stuck,  
Doing what you want.

-Jordan, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** What a very good and unique definition of the word "freedom!" Do you ever see yourself making a return trip to Hotel Juvenile Hall? Value your freedom because like you said in your piece, you can be doing a millions of better things with your time than sitting behind bars. What is your favorite thing to do with your

## Losing My Mind

I lose my mind all the time.  
I lose my mind when I wake up, or go to sleep, or walk around.  
Life in juvenile hall is a constant craze fest.  
No one is the same in here as they are outside.  
So we're all losing it. I'm a lunatic.  
I can't stand it in here. I'm goin' friggin' nuts.  
I'm coo coo for cocoa puffs. And I love it.  
I can't be nuts anywhere else,  
because I know people on the outside and care about them.  
I've never met anyone in here, before.  
So I can do whatever I want, as long as it's within the limitations.  
I'm crazy about freedom.

-Forest, Santa Cruz

**From The Beat:** Quite a piece Forest. As they say, you're crazy alright, crazy like a fox.

## The Raw Deal

What it do mang? This yo' boy Lil' Troublesum from Hayward, comin' at y'all one time mang. Everything ain't what it seems! In other words, you could say, looks can deceive the eyes.

When you run the streets at a constant pace, you come in contact with phony individuals that are really imposters trying to bring you down. These people will run game on the wannabe's, but a real gee will see right through 'em.

An example could be when you are coo' with yo' potna, then y'all get down together and do just about everything together. In yo' mind he's proved himself, and you consider him solid. But an unexpected situation pops off and yo' potna is snitchin' on you like there was no tomorrow!

You try to think of a good enough reason why he's dropping dimes on you — but can't come out with a logical answer! So finally you decide it's true: Everything ain't what it seems! Always stayin' true to the game, one love —

-Lil' Juanito, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** You spit truth except for how you end this piece, but that's the part we just can't get you to see. Staying true to the game is like choosing to get played again and again. It's like they say: Don't blame the player, blame the game! 'Cause every player gets played by the game in the end, and every gangster feels the pain when push comes to shove and the one you trusted as a friend shows you no love. So quit being true to a game that will never be true to you, or else end up hanging in the SHU, then getting betrayed by some shotcaller you thought you knew.

## Thought I Knew You

i thought i knew you  
but you tell on everybody  
i thought i knew you  
but your mama told me  
that you be lying about your family  
i thought i knew y'all  
but you ninja' is the fakest  
peoples i ever knew in my life  
i thought i knew you  
but i really don't have any idea  
of who you really was  
i thought i knew you  
but when i seen you crying  
because you said that someone took your money  
i seen that you was a fake-ass ninja  
trying to put on an act for me and my ninjas  
i thought i knew you  
but i don't know you dude  
and you do not know me  
so kick rocks you mark

-Choyce, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** There's a lot of bitterness in this piece, and facing serious charges as you do, it's not hard to understand. Still, you need to take the focus off hating this or that player in the game, fake or not, and see that it's the nature of the game for everybody to get got, for every player to get played. It's like that old saying, "Don't blame the player, blame the game." Of course, those who usually say this, think that they're so slick they can live in that shhh and none will stick — but sooner or later, the game plays every single player.

## My Heart

My heart seems to know forgetfulness  
more than apology, that stranger. It hurts,  
but also helps, to know I feel like dirt.  
But I'm obligated to know.  
No, I'm wrong. I don't have to know  
as I write this. I guess I just have to learn  
the beat of my heart.

-Christina, Santa Cruz

**From The Beat:** This is remarkable. We bet many folks will cut this poem out of The Beat. We wonder, though, if you are really forgetting. We bet that what you feel regret for is just barely below the surface of your consciousness. We bet it pops up, perhaps frequently. In any case, this is a wonderful poem.

## Laugh At Me Now

i thought i knew you but you flipped the script  
i thought you were special  
but you were one of pandora's gifts  
i tried to save us but you didn't catch my drift  
you was holding me down but i wanted to lift  
shhh got screwed and i thought you was ready  
when the boat began to rock you wasn't steady  
now i heard they callin' you bopper betty  
said you was with me 'cause i was all about my 'fetti  
i ain't trippin' 'cause you gots no money  
now i'm gettin' letters sayin' — i'm sorry honey  
— but shhh is funny  
i'm always full and i hear a rumble in your tummy  
ha ha — laugh at the outcome  
your days is raining and i got sun  
when i get out don't be callin'  
'cause you gon' see big vick ballinggg

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** Man, those first five lines are so very fine, especially, "you was holdin' me down but i wanted a lift" — if content counts as much as a surprising rhyme's twist. We changed the adjective describing Betty, but it still keeps its idea (meaning not sound) rhyme. Have we told you before how Ezra Pound broke down poetry into three different tests of excellence: melopoeia ("dance" of sound), phanopoeia ("dance" of image), and logopoeia ("dance" of thought)? Well, we understand the bitterness guiding the argument of your poem, but we hope you get over it someday — 'cause it's a destructive force in your soul.

## All the Freedom You Want

my definition of freedom  
is being out with your family  
and having fun  
and staying out of jail  
because if you stay out of jail  
you can have all the freedom you want  
be with your family and friends  
and nobody can't take that away from you  
because you got all the time in the world  
to do anything that you want to do  
because you are free  
and when you are free  
you will have a lovely time  
when you have a freedom  
peace out beat  
this is yo boy lil' sam  
god bless

**-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You got it all right again, Sam. No one can take it away from you, but you can give it away if you go back to the bad old days. Don't go back to crime and indeed can have a lovely time with your family and your friends. Your lovely time will never end as long as you live — if you live right, day and night.

## Sometimes I Wonder...

What's outside our facility  
What's happening at school  
How many people are on the earth  
How far does the sky go  
When I'm leaving  
What I'm going to do on the outs  
When everyone is going to die  
How I am going to die  
What it's like to go around the world

**-Nick, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat:** These are interesting things to wonder. But there's only one thing we could reasonably take a stab at. We think there are about six billion people on this planet. We wish we knew what it was like to go around the world.

## Off To CYA

Q-Vo Beat and Beat readers? This that boy Baby Jesus from Oakland. Well, I'm up here for from running from ROP (the Rites of Passage program) — plus I messed around and caught another case!

I just went to court a week ago. I was looking for a blessing, but what I got was a CYA sentencing. My public pretender said that if I'm lucky I might only do eighteen months — but knowing myself and my tendencies, I'll probably end up maxing out!

I was on the run for a cool minute. Therefore, I can't say I fully regret running from ROP. That program was hella bootsie, too! But I ain't gonna lie — I'm lightweight stressing now. I'm probably gonna have a lil'.

Gesus on the way pretty soon, so I gotta start planning some things out. You feel?

Well, I'm 'bout to cut this piece short. Alrato vatos!

**-Baby Jesus, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Your words indicate you might have a kid coming, but it sounds like you're not ready to change. So what's your plan? To rob a bank? Or just bank money on the street? Man, it's time for you to put all the street games behind you — and focus on your kid! That is a big responsibility. Your child deserves a father who knows how to hold a legal job so he can stay out of jail and spend his money on diapers and food instead of making bail. Plus, if you max out, it's because you still haven't figured out how to slow your role and stop before you spin out of control. You only need one plan: start acting like a mature, responsible man.

## The Dozen Wonders, Minus Five

- 1: I wonder why I was born.
- 2: I wonder what my family is doing right now.
- 3: I wonder why I am doing this list.
- 4: I wonder when I am going to get out of here.
- 5: I wonder if my girlfriend still loves me.
- 6: I wonder where all my homies are at.
- 7: I wonder why I have to be here.

**-Jose, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat:** That first one is a biggy. Just about every one gets around to asking that. And most of us keep on going, even without an answer.

## Since I Came to the Hall

my life changed when i stepped foot inside  
alameda county juvenile hall  
i started acting different and get mad  
i'd try to be another person i'm not  
and i've realized that the person i used to be  
before i came here was kind, respectful and hard working  
now i am in-and-out of juvy hall  
getting arrested a lot and fighting a lot  
and every time i get out again  
it feels like i want to come back  
— every time!

**-Jeremy, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You've made a breakthrough if you've realized that you like the person you used to be better than the person you've become. When after getting released, you find yourself actually wanting to come back here — that's called institutionalization. It's like this place is fairly structured and predictable, and you know you're way around (you know what to do and what not to do, you know how to "work" this place), but also it's just so familiar to you that you can actually relax more in here than on the outs where you don't know what might pop off next, especially with all the fights you volunteer for these days. Still, now that you know the problem, you can start solving it.

## Going Home

What up, Beat? This Lil' Trail in 150 Hall (AlaCo). Well, I was on EM (electric monitor) doing hella good, but I had to come back here 'cause my phone got cut off! I had been on EM for about two months, and I was getting off it on the twentieth of December.

When I get out of here, I am going to do what I got to do to get off probation! I'm about to be eighteen in six months, and it's not going to be no more Hall — it's going to be the Big House! And I am not trying to go that far.

**-Lil' Trail, 150 Crew**

**From the Beat:** Sounds like a good plan, but tell us what you expect it to take for you to get off probation. And tell us what the pitfalls will be — what sort of thing might pop up to trip you up. 'Cause it's better to be prepared to handle it, or old habits may make your choice for you before you have time to think it through. Keep cool wherever they send you and keep writing.

## I Am About To Get Out

I am about to get out this nasty Juvenile Hall, hopefully. I am not sure yet, but I think I am.

When I get out, I want to go back to school — and get my job back so I can help my momma out. And I want to make her proud and let her know that I'm not a eff up. I also want to be the one to look out for her. I don't want her to be working for me so I can eat. I want her to stay home and spend some time with my family without her getting so tired from work. I just want her to chill at the house.

**-Slot, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Sounds like a great plan. Make sure you really do set about it when you get out, but don't expect it to happen overnight. Just get yourself on track with legal work, 'cause fast money makes you feel big for a minute, and then you reap the consequences. So start doing right by day and by night, and it's guaranteed: your mom will be proud of you all right!

## Tank

Ring! Ring!

Tank: Hello

Erica: Tank, your brother just got killed on 105th and Foothill. You got to come, police are all over the place

Tank: How you know it's my brother?

Erica: 'Cause I heard the police say his name.

At the time I didn't know if I could trust her, cause a homegirl told me she wasn't cool (but you know how girls are, when they try to get what they want, or should I say, when they're jealous.) At the time, everybody knew that I was a big money maker, I mean people would see my car and holler out "Tank!" from the West to the East. So I kind of thought it was a hit list, or someone was just trying to set me up for money reasons. But at the time I wasn't selling dope, I was just working at the Black Muslim bakery. So I was cautious for getting robbed 'cause I worked for that.

Tank: So what you're telling me is that my brother was shot and killed?

Erica: Yes Tank, I'm serious

Tank: Well before they try to call his phone while we're on the line.

Erica: Whatever. Do it then, just call it and call me back

Tank: Hell man, stay on the phone

Erica: OK

I instantly speed-dialed his mother, ring ring ring. I was thinkin' to myself, damn, this ninja better answer his phone. Ring! The person you have called is not answering at the time so please feel free to -- click.

Erica: See Tank, I told you I wasn't lying.

Tank: Well I'm on my way right down there. Click.

I'm driving and driving, cruising through the street trying to make it to 105th and Foothill, fast like Nascar, and I'm driving wondering if this girl is lying, but assuming the best cause this involves my big brother. The street was clear of police but a lot of motorcycles, so I tried to get away from right there fast, 'cause I knew the police was going to come soon, so i hit a lift on 10th and E. 14th and started to do a slow drive so i can notice anything suspicious.

So I'm riding and I notice a car at the end of the street.

The people in the car were loading some guns. One was puffing on a blunt and the first was loading guns. They didn't see me coming because I was slow driving down the street.

To be continued... .

-Tank, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** What a cliffhanger! All we can do, Tank, is expect the worst and still hope for the best, waiting for Part 2 of this night... we feel like we're right there with you driving down the street, terrified of what we might find there.

I want to know

why people die.

I want to know why I'm here

## Dead At Sixteen

What's up Beat? This is Lil' Anthony from Hayward. My life-changing experience was when my closest homeboy got murdered at the age of sixteen. My homeboy's name was Arturo Romero. RIP homie! We all miss you.

After my boy got killed, my life went all downhill. I started drinking everyday and smoking trees all day, just to take the pain away!

For the first couple of weeks, I was crying a lot. But then I thought my homeboy wouldn't want us to cry for him. He'd want us to ride for him. And that's what we started doing. Everyone was doing what they were doing, all for him.

I ended up getting into some things and ended up back here at Alameda County Juvenile Hall. This life ain't cool in here. Everyday it's the same thing, same nasty-ass food. All I want to do is get out and live my life and rep' the hood.

To all doing time, keep your heads up and stay strong. To all in the pen — try your hardest to get out! And RIP to all the fallen homies. RIP Arturo Romero, we miss you homie! Never to be forgotten!

Well, Beat, it's about that time. I'll get at y'all next week. This Lil' Ant and I'm out.

-Lil' Ant, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** You're failing to see that Arturo Romero was transformed when his soul was released and his body deceased. His soul flew to the bosom of a loving and merciful God, purified of all his sins, his blind mistakes forgiven. By the side of God, he now shares a heavenly vision. Therefore, looking down he grieves over your decision to make the same mistakes he did in the belief that your showing him love and respect. Watch for him in your dreams, you just might get a visit. He'll tell you not to ride for revenge, not to add murder to your list of sins, and besides it just keeps the heat on the 'hood — and all he wants now is what's good for the homies he loved when he walked the earth. Now he knows that gangster life is not worth dying for nor killing. He wants to see you choose a life that's worth living — worth living for, like growing up to be a man who never sees the inside of the Pin but holds down a legal job and shows up for his kids at Christmas and their birthdays parties and teaches them not to do what he did but guided by the spirit of his fallen homie, a productive and happier life to live. RIP Arturo Romero, visit Lil' Ant in a dream and teach him how to show love and care for.

## Walkin' Down the Street

Not a thought in the world, thizzin' off a pill and drunk. I look across the street and I see six ninjas throwing up they turf and talkin' hella shhh . So we start throwin' ours up and we kept on walkin' . We got a block away then we see them again and they shootin' at us. I just cut, because I wasn't tryna get hit and the next day I found out my boy got killed. 'Till this day, I don't know how it happened, but it changed me forever.

-Young Hyfe, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** Ugh, what a tragic story. We're grateful that you survived, and that it changed you... tell us how it changed you. Did it make you more angry with the other turf? Or more likely to think all that stuff is BS? Did it make you stay away from pills? Did it make you value life more? The second part of this story is one we'd love to hear.

## Why Are Things The Way They Are

I want to know why people die.

I want to know why I'm here.

Why gravity keeps us on the ground when the world is round.

Why the clouds don't blow away.

Why people kill people for no reason.

Why people try to act hard when they're not.

Why there are so many hungry people in this world

Why things are the way they are.

Why?

I guess because that's Life

-Rj, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** This poem hits the great mysteries of our lives, from the riddles we see looking out into the streets to the riddles we see when we look up at the sky. Do you have answers to any of these questions, either because you've thought about them or because you're ready to think about them now? If you know enough to ask, you know enough to try and discover.



## Wanting Something Back

When my homeboy Monster passed away, me and the whole 'hood changed. Shhh wasn't the same without my ninja!

My homie Snoopy passed away. Shhh was crazy too! I had just seen him about thirty minutes before he died. And again my hood changed. A whole bunch of shhh happened. My little homie Rascal's death was the worst though. He had just turned fifteen. I miss all of my ninjas. If I could just have them back! RIP Monster, Rascal, Snoopy.

### -Hollow, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** We are sorry to hear about your losses, but as you know they are not coming back. It's time for you to learn from their mistakes and stop living the street life. When you twist your grief into a thirst for revenge, then someone else comes in here listing more names of other young people from another hood that he loved and grew up with. Imagine God showed you in a dream that when you pick up a gun and shoot, the bullets go through Monster, Rascal, Snoopy, Angel, Payaso — even if you want to tell yourself the story that it was your enemy riding through your 'hood, as long as you take pride in calling yourself Hollowtip, you share responsibility for it! RIP to all the martyrs to the street — loved ones and "enemies" killed by one disease!

## Life is Sad

Life is sad when you're behind these bars.  
Isolated from other people makes me feel like I'm from Mars.

I'm gonna rot behind this door  
But still I keep my head up, not letting it hit the floor.  
I hate stayin' in this little room.

It's too small, to me it feels like I'm trapped in a cocoon.

The dim light in my room shining at my face  
Letting the staff spray me with mace.

I'm tired of this,

There ain't even a toilet for when I gotta go piss

In here, they don't even let me see my girl.

This place makes me sick and wanna hurl. I'm a criminal, oh well,

Now I'm stuck in this cell.

Life is sad, but don't get depressed and don't get mad.

### -Lil' Mental, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** We'd love to say something to you like "Keep your head up" but in a way it seems like we don't have to. Each of your poem shows that that is exactly what you are doing, you're writing the words that will comfort you, writing the lines that will make you stronger, making sense of all of this with your rhymes, and hopefully other people will be able to take comfort from recognizing their own lives in

## The Strength of Love

love is strong  
my love for you was strong  
but i thought i knew you  
but i was wrong  
you was sweet as a dove  
soft as a rose  
our love is gone  
but my love for you still lives on  
with me it goes on and on  
but my broken heart  
you left me with has healed

### -Jermaine, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** It is amazing when the love outlasts the pain, even when there is no tomorrow and nothing to be gained. Still, true love is strong, and long after the wound has healed, true love goes on and on. Someday another will take her place and your healed heart will not fear love's face, as with so many whose love is weaker than their pain. Their love dies before their pain, and when love comes again, in fear they run away — hide behind the mask of a player and play like love's a game. Your love is stronger than theirs, Jermaine, and it will be to your gain.

## Liberty

I think liberty is something cool  
Cause you get to do whatever you want  
Nobody tells you what to do  
you get to breathe in fresh air  
you get to do things out there that you could never do in here  
Freedom is something that can never be explained  
IN here you have to ask permission for everything!  
Permission for simple things like going to the bathroom  
We have to wait a few minutes before we piss!  
The food here is not like the food at home  
That's why I give you this advice  
Get out, behave yourself live life like it was meant to be --  
With Freedom

### -Lazy, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** We know that you learned this simple and beautiful wisdom in the most painful way possible, and we hope that you too soon get the chance to breathe fresh air... in the meantime, this poem is like a breath of fresh air, a reminder of why we should never take our freedom for granted

## Freedom Is To Think Freely

my definition of freedom is not being out of jail  
but being able to read or just the feeling of freedom  
because right now i am in juvenile hall  
and really we are in disneyland compared to other places  
like pelican bay, CYA, san quentin, folsom, chino, and rita  
but yeah, i don't think having freedom  
mean you have to be out  
as long as you can think freely, so remember that  
don't forget there are always others who got it worse

### -Lil' Porkey, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** You said a mouthful of truth, but then don't get too used to this place either. Thinking freely is a great definition of freedom, but if you continue to think unrealistically without considering consequences — that is to say, if your thinking keeps getting you locked up because you confuse freedom with doing whatever you want to do whenever you want to do it: you're volunteering to be a slave to the system. That can't be freedom!

## Check it Out Ladies (Rewrite)

Why are so many compelled to be self-conscious about the way they look and the way they're supposed to look. Thin. Low Weight. Skimpy, tight, showy clothes which disgrace one's features, thus making her slutty looking. And if I were to walk alongside her I would be suspected of being her pimp or her owner.

My questions are, why show so much skin?

So why not. It looks good.

No!

The point is it's easy. She's easy.

I hate when my fellow brothers say they be having all these women. Talkin' 'bout how they got "pearl." "She do this, she do that, I'll get her out her pants" in one sentence. And why I ain't got so many females on me. The question is: Why? Because it's not respectable.

In all words, it's not right. If she took her pants off to me so quick, how do you know she wouldn't take off her jeans to the next dude, and so she'll be called a "bop" or a "ripper".

And why should you show yourselves like that? Men, why treat our women like that? Using, abusing, hating, playing my sisters, aunts, cousins, nieces, mothers, grandmothers. Disrespecting, degrading, contemplating my feminine sexes downfall. And please, my black beauties, luscious Latinas, classic Caucasians, my adorable Asians, so don't encourage this attitude towards yourselves. Please and Thank You

### -Mainy Hyena, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** They say that all writing is re-writing. And it's true that much of what writing is is going over your work, time and time again, revising, reviewing, editing, shining the work to perfection. The fact that you are showing your own essays that kind of attention just shows another example of how you have potential to do this (or your art) as a profession. Keep it up.

## Freedom Equals: Peace Enriches the Earth

my definition of freedom would be me getting released  
and every state penitentiary would crumble  
and every juvenile institution would fall in its place  
and the world would only have to worry about  
people dying of natural causes  
and everybody would be able to leave their door unlocked  
'cause no one would trip off silly shhh  
and everybody would get along  
now don't get me wrong  
i am gangster to the fullest  
but a world of peace would be the greatest to me  
that's why this is my definition of freedom  
freedom equals peace to me  
so i will never be free unless peace  
enriches the earth  
and i don't have to worry about shhh but my family

-Guero, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** You can help make that world of peace. All you have to do is stop living the street life, and then you will have successfully lowered the crime rate by one person. Everyday you choose to be part of the solution or part of the problem. We deeply admire your vision, why not make a decision to be a soldier in a visionary army fighting for peace and freedom. Instead of waiting for everyone (else) to get along, let everyone who's strong bring another along, till one by one the earth is won. If greed, violence and hate, made the gangster life your fate, then why not fight your true enemies which are not people at all — but greed, violence and hate that seal the fate of the prisoner and the widow, the orphan, the homeless, the pimp and the whore, the killer and his victim. Speak out! Others will listen. Teach by your example how to beat the system!

## Thanksgiving Memories

Wow! Where do I start? Well, the best Thanksgiving memory is my saddest memory.

I remember that one Thanksgiving Day, my grandmother was over, when she was like in her eighties or so. She was the best grandmother ever! And she could cook!

But this particular Thanksgiving Day was like no other to me. See my grandmother is very old, right? And so like old people get sometimes, she was being stubborn about eating. She would not eat for nobody — not my mom, my nana or my uncle.

Then I gave it a try, to see if she'd eat for me, because my grandmother and I have a special bond between us. And the next thing you know — I fed her! She ate for me! My family was proud of me for what I'd done, and in a way I was proud of myself, too.

Well, I'll let you go now. Remember to keep in touch with your family, Beat readers, because you never know when you'll need them the most.

-Fairlas, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** From time to time, usually with regard to specific members of your family out there, you show such great heart — compassion, love and understanding — that we are deeply moved. If you do follow through on changing your life out there, there is no therapy that works better than being of service to others, especially those whom you love and care about, like your little brother and your grandmother. It does develop pride in ways that are exactly the opposite of being down to ride — 'cause you're on the side of life and love, not death and hate. It really can help you change your fate. Much love and respect.

## All I Need Is Love

all i need is some love  
i told myself i am done with drugs  
all i want is people to show me love  
i am tired of people calling me a thug  
i told myself i can make it above  
all i need is someone to show me love

-Jeremy, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** Most of us have family to hold us down. Try to use them as your source of support. But if your family is not there for you, show yourself some love! Share wisdom with yourself as a loving father would with his son, then listen to wisdom. Start mothering yourself, doing those things a mother would do for you — feed yourself well, make yourself look proper and respectable, give yourself a treat now and then. And when tears drop from your eyes, promise yourself what you write above — no more thuggin' and no more druggin'! Show yourself some lovin'.

## Not me, not Mainy!

Sent to a military gladiator school  
in California,  
straight wilderness.  
Boots and slacks,  
camo hats,  
single-file lines,  
deer country with pine.  
And I'm pissed.  
Set up to kiss my life away,  
and that don't even seem so great anymore.  
With a fake army camp rehab is brain torture.  
Authority with lame structure  
Not me, Mainy Hyena will take none of that.  
I'd rather stay in Max.  
It don't matter, my life at this point is hectic.  
I really lost the thing that makes me go

-Mainy Hyena, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** We have faith that even if you go to this school, you will find a way to get through it, rise above it, learn from it. As long as your mind and pen belong to you — you can get through anything. Peace.

## The Way I Feel

I'm sick of people making me feel like I got to prove. I get heated when people talk mess, like saying I'm scary and when then saying I'm a b. That makes me heated, because I know who I am and I know what I got to do. But when they say things like that I let it get to me so bad.

Sometimes I just feel like saying forget it and going all out, but I can't because of who I think about, and also because I think about myself.

I got to be strong and not weak. And they think by my not taking flight on someone first when they talk mess that means I'm a b!

And that's why they don't know shhh. Maybe they might prove themselves to each other but what to do they got to prove to themselves. That's why they are weak if they do stuff like that. Those are some pure punks.

-Rasta, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** Everyone in the system is scared inside. You know what they're most scared of though? Letting other people see how scared they are. You know how a parrot puffs up its feathers when it's nervous, just to make itself look bigger? That's what they are doing when they try to get you started.... a real man ignores it and walks away, because it's more important to him to get out and be with his loved ones than to prove himself to a bunch of strangers... Just keep walking away.

## I Can't Trust You, Girl

i thought i knew you but  
i can't even leave eighty dollars in my pants  
without you going into them to jack it  
and you are supposed to be my girl  
but don't think you had trust  
it's just that i was slippin' that day, drunk  
i guess you was waiting for me to pass out  
that is messed up, girl  
i thought i knew you but  
i guess it's bad

-Free Man, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** You deserve better than a girl who steals from you. We explained to you how an addict will (eventually) do anything to feed his/her addiction, and stealing from someone he/she loves is a classic example. Your girl can't love you and dope at the same time. So tell her that until and unless she can get clean and sober, it's all over — (and you too need to address the drinking!). Whether you wait for her or try to find another girl for you, keep writing the truth and expressing your point of view — 'cause it's good for you and our readers, too!

## People Change

I thought I knew a lot of people  
But, see  
A lot of things change  
An' people, too  
So if you ain't gettin' down  
Wit' the movement  
Then, hey  
I'm a act like I don't know you  
'Cause you ain't none of my thugs  
So, yeah, man  
But then, again  
I ain't trippin' off knowing nobody  
Long as I know myself  
And that I'm a real ninja  
Then it's a rap  
Because the cops is watchin'  
Tha streets is talkin'  
Yo' girl is unfaithful  
Yo' family ungrateful  
Yo' ninjas ain't loyal  
Yo' ninjas ain't lawyers  
An' everybody saw ya  
An' ain't that a witch?

-Young Jeff LCERS, SF/YGC

**From The Beat:** What movement are you writing about? Why would you act like you don't know anybody? Who are you writing to or about, when you write "Yo' girls is unfaithful..."? It's great that you know yourself so well, but you seem to be hatin' on somebody, maybe a lot of people, but you don't explain why.

## Made a Mistake In Life

I feel sometimes I lose control, like when someone punches me in my face and I want to beat them the hell up because I have a hot mind. I ain't no sucker!

Some people laugh at me if I can't talk. I don't care, let them. I can control myself, but sometimes I feel like I lost control — and I be feeling like I want to kill them! Still, I know I can control myself. Except that when I get drunk or get high, I'm mostly always looking for fight or looking to rob somebody — I always used to do that. Now I've learn something. I've learned what's right and what's wrong, and I'm done with all that. I won't do it anymore.

That's what I tell myself, but I still do it anyway! I think I don't make too much trouble, but then I never thought that I would ever go to jail. But here I am. I could even end up dead, that's what I feel sometimes, if I was still out there. But now I'm in jail for some serious crime I committed.

All my friends and family know where I'm at, too, because people wrote about me in the newspaper! My friends and family are very disappointed in me. I know they miss me a lot and they want me to go back home. I have been in here for two months, and I just want to get out of here so I can have a fresh start in life — but maybe that will never happen now.

-Dwan, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** If we ever read a piece by someone who really needed to stop getting drunk and high, this is it! It's pretty clear that when you're sober, you want to control yourself and you do control yourself, but when you're drunk or high, you don't want to control yourself and start looking for a fight or looking to rob someone. You say so yourself. Why did it never occur to you that you needed to stop drinking and smoking? Or maybe we're wrong — were you drunk or high when you committed your serious crime? Or when you planned it, if you planned it? Have you talked to your lawyer about a diversion program? A drug rehabilitation program? Of course, you won't get out right away, but when you do get out, you might just be able to stay out next time. Would you be willing to give up getting drunk and high if it meant you could return to living a free life?

## What Freedom Means

freedom is when you  
do whatever you want to do  
smoke what you wanna smoke  
eat what you wanna eat  
go anywhere you wanna go  
talk to anybody you want to  
be with your family anytime  
when you smelling fresh air  
being out and free —  
that' what freedom mean' to me

-Ls(Mien), 150 Crew

**From the Beat:** Sounds like freedom — good description! You could have left out the smoking part, but overall it sounded good — as long as you don't mean "doing whatever I want, whenever I want to do it", because that's a fantasy of freedom. Freedom in real life and in the real world, means accepting responsibility to suit up, show up and handle your business (we don't mean the dope game) so that when you have the opportunity to do what you want, you have the freedom to do it. "Doing whatever I want whenever I want to do it" puts your freedom in jeopardy — not to mention your home life and your relationship with loved ones.

## I Regret...

I regret making my mom suffer  
Thinking about my shhh, I wonder  
Why did I do it? Why was I stupid?  
Looking back at my life, shhh, I was used to it  
I put her through hell; I can't sleep well  
The thoughts of her sickness makes me hear the bells  
Ring a ding ding; ninja, change your thoughts  
It's time to stop the evil that you brought  
Change my ways to a different lane  
Make a new path to form a better way  
'Cause she's been my mother and father through all these years  
Working her hardest, never having a fear  
Of what is to come, of what is to be

The future ahead of us, that we  
can't see  
Please forgive me, mother, before  
it's too late  
'Cause I'll always love you 'til the  
end of my days  
Love,  
Your son

-Mondi, Marin

**From The Beat:** Beautiful poem to your mother. She needs to read and know how you feel about the things you've putted her through. She deserves it especially after all the things she has done for you. She also deserve more than this beautiful words. What's so hard in making your parents happy? In stopping her tears and suffering from invading her life? Do the right thing for you, your parents and those who love

## My friends and family are very disappointed in me.

## A Lyrical Standoff

Yo!  
I'm tired of ninjas  
That think they so hard at the  
Ranch  
But don't wanna go home  
I can't understand  
W'ats running through y'all  
heads  
Like I give a damn  
About w'at you sayin'  
Like I comprehend!!!  
You ain't even talkin' my  
language  
But you runnin' yo' mouth  
Why you tryna encourage me  
To run in yo' house?  
You lookin' at me  
But you don't wanna see  
You cats wouldn't last a  
minute  
Tryna be me!  
Call me a square  
Call me soft  
But you don't know me!  
You tough  
You want beef?

You gon' have to show me!  
Afraid to be different  
Wanna knock me for being  
positive  
But I'm the leader of my team  
Of international street  
operatives!  
This to set the record straight  
That I'm not here to make  
friends  
I roll wit' my chosen few  
Call it what you want  
But if you wanna make it  
You better choose yours, too!!!  
Word up!  
The Brooklyn Born Bathing  
Ape  
Peace!!

-B Littles LCERS, SF/YGC

**From The Beat:** It sounds like you're responding to somebody giving you a hard time. You're right to stay strong and ignore it, even when sometimes it must be hard. For some reason, many down at the Ranch stay messing with each other. What do you mean by—you're the leader of your team of international street operatives? That sounds ominous. You know if you go right back to the streets again, when you're off the Ranch, you may be right back up in juvy, the Ranch, or worse?



### *My First Home Pass*

What's up, Beat? This Tony from Fremont. I'm up here at Camp, and two days from now is Thanksgiving! So I got a three-day pass for twelve hours!

I been here for a month, and I'm hella happy the holiday came right when it was my first home pass, 'cause I got three days instead of one. It's been a month and it feels like I been here for one week — the time goes by so fast! And now that I start going home on the weekend, it will only go faster.

So, to all in the Hall 'bout to come to Camp: Don't run! It's too easy. And stay up!

**-Tony, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You sound like you're doing a great program. Usually the time passes faster when you stay busy. Is that your secret? For some people the time feels like it's dragging by in slow motion. How do you do your program so that it feels like time goes by fast? And, by the time you read this response, you'll be back from your home pass, probably two or three home passes. So tell us what it's like for you being on the outs. What do you do? Is it hard to come back, or easy because you know when you finish you'll be out there with no warrant on your back? Free!

### *Thankful For...*

I'm thankful for every good thing in my life  
Thankful for life period

Thankful to have a mom to take care of me  
Thankful for having legs and arms to work with  
Thankful for a tongue to speak,

For ears to be hear with  
Thankful for brothers and sisters to talk to when I  
need help the most.

Most of all I'm happy to have 12 months in ROP  
instead of anything else.

That's what I'm thankful for.

**-Rj, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** And we are thankful to see someone looking on the bright side of his own life, reminding us all about how valuable and important the things and people we take for granted truly are.

## it's me by myself i'm the one that needs to help

### *I Wish I Knew You...*

Ha, I thought I knew you

I took my time

I got to know you

Like I was supposed to

Guess I didn't know enough

Though, huh?

Even when I found out enough

To me it wasn't much!

But, as you can see

We're outta touch

Was it love

Or was it lust?

Now, or later

Is what I've been

Both lover and true friend

Now I'm like, forget that shhh

I'm not gon' ever love again!

I could enjoy my own damn love

'Cause nobody else ever will

Yo', my moms think I'm handsome

The mirror on the wall

Tell it all

I thought I knew ya

I thought wrong!

Just a Brooklyn Born Bathing Ape...

**-B Littles LCRS, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** We can feel your heartbreak in your poem, B Littles, and you have our sympathy. It must be even harder for you, when the relationship with someone you love crumples and you're away at the Ranch and can't do much to salvage it, because you can't be with your lady to make things better. Please never give up on love or close your heart. Especially when someone is young, s/he may need her boy/girlfriend to be there close by all the time, so messing up, getting arrested and being sent somewhere away often threatens the most solid relationships. As soon as you're free again, you'll be surprised how happy the young ladies will be to see you. Can you take it slowly next time you meet a lady you like, get to know her first, and then see where it goes?

### *Changed My Life Forever*

It changed my life forever, until I die: I got pregnant at fifteen years old. At first I couldn't picture myself being a mother at a young age.

At first I couldn't manage going to school, keeping up my grades at the same time as trying to keep a job to support my son so I could buy diapers, not them cheap-ash ones — I want Huggies for my baby!

I didn't think I was going to make it at first. When I just had my son, my mama kicked me out! Basically, she moved me to Louisiana, but it got flucked up. So I came back to California.

**-Teshayla, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You set yourself a pretty difficult task for a fifteen year old — bearing a son and choosing to raise him yourself! We don't know how things flubbed up, but we believe your effort to be (s)heroic. Of course you want what's best for your baby boy, and that's still the issue. What will it take for you to do what's best for your son at this point? Meanwhile, if all it took was love, we see that your baby would always have the best.

### *A Little Something*

man forget this world

it's me by myself

i'm the one that needs to help

my momma didn't beat me with the belt

so i thought it was going to be

lecture after lecture but i went to jail

no one came but my momma to visit me in this jail

i probably couldn't have done it without her help

been away from home 'bout two years straight

got out, four months later i was back in this place

my mom still came to visit sometimes

even though i disrespected her and said stay out of mine

left out the house from time to time

but when i came back she tried to show me love

by taking me to the mall to get some girbauds, jordans and all the shhh

and i went up there and start fighting 'cause some ninjas disrespect

my crew — and we all got them up and my moms was trying to stop me

but my dumb-ash told her to leave 'cause she ain't gotta worry 'bout me

i just ran to catch up with my patnas and did stuff i wasn't suppose to do

i wish i didn't do that 'cause i love my mom too much and i know

i hurt her feelings and i'm fo' real sorry 'bout that so

i'm gon let that be the reason i get my life straight

to make my mom happy and proud of me — that's it, late

**-Lil' Cookie, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** We feel you on this one, but have a hard time lining it up with the other poem where you write about loving to but and being all 'bout the money and being down and all that. Yeah, we know that's the way you used to be, but if you really mean to change you can't keep talking the same — or thinking the same — or you'll end up doing the same, just like that day at the mall with your mom while she's there getting you all fitted. You're so smart, maybe now that you're working on seeing into your true heart, you'll truly be ready to start making the changes you need to make if you really want to get your life straight for your mom's sake. 'Cause the truth is if you aren't doing it for you, too, you'll still go back to what you used to do. You're headed in the right direction here, but keep thinking and writing about it till you get more clear about what changes you need to make to stay out of here. It's not just a question of self-control but of reeducating your heart and soul — and you can do it, if you decide to get to it.

## Just Pray. Thank Him

What's up Beat. It's yo' boy.

Who? Mike Jonez. You see it.

But yeah I just want to say good luck to all in need of it. Mayn its hard in here stressin', thinkin' about your case.

Thinkin' bout your family and thinkin' 'bout your lady. Well I'ma just tell y'all that no matter at kind of situation you in just keep you chin way up and handle it. The best thing to do is get on your knees at night and just pray. Pray to the lord about what's on your mind. I was once told that I needed the Lord in my life. But I ignored him. I'm just sayin try to change your life and give your life to the Lord while you can.

I pray every night, to the morning. And when you wake up. It doesn't hurt to say "Good Morning Lord."

Just pray. Thank him. I love you.

**-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You know what we'd have to say is the most inspiring thing about this piece? Not the fact that you pray each night, though it's good to hear you find comfort in it, and hope. Not the fact that you when you wake up you say "Good Morning Lord" although that too showed us the way you are always on the side of the positive. No the thing that moved us in this piece was that even while you are suffering through a dark time in your own life, you still took the time to wish luck and advice and comfort to strangers - the other people reading in The Beat - without picking a race or a gang or a neighborhood in particular. We couldn't help thinking that that's how Jesus would have handled being in your situation... by reaching out to others. Peace.

## It's Bad But Good at the Same Time.

Man, what it do Beat! I'm gonna be gone. I'm talk about out of here to a bigger and worsen place. When I turn 18, on January 5, 2007. They gone get me outta here and send me to Santa Rita. I'm gonna be hella mad. But at least I know more people up there. I just hope everything goes well in my case, so I can get out of here.

I can't wait for that day to come. Straight up. That's gon' be the best day of my life. I swear. But yup I'm just hopin' and prayin' for the best, you feel me. I'ma holla back. One love. Late!

**-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** For as long as you need it, the pages of The Beat Within (or Beat Without) will always be here for you. No matter where they send you, your voice will have a home in our publication. Peace.

## Haters

Man, haters like to hate too much. Why haters got to hate on the next man's game?

Why haters got to hate on you and tell yo' female something that ain't true. Blood why haters got to hate because you got a female and they don't blood why haters got to hate and say that you's a sucker in love. You ain't no sucka just because you in love with a female.

Why haters got to hate because you in love and they're not in love. Why haters got to hate because you got a finer girl then they don't. Man, why haters got to hate. I don't like haters that's all they do for a livin' is hate.

**-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** One of the ugliest things about the system (and the streets for that matter) is the way it turns strength into weakness and tries to turn weakness into strength. Love is what we were put here for as human beings, hate is what we get twisted into when our human nature is poisoned - by poverty, by violence, by imprisonment. Your fight to stay in touch with the love you feel for your girl, for your brother, for all your loved one, is a fight to hold on to your humanity in the face of all the rottenness that the system feeds on. Keep fighting that fight, you know where your true strength lies.

## I'm A Good Person

Man, I'm a really nice person. But if you mess with me, it's bad. Man for real though, people just don't know you feel me. I love, I respect, I do kind things. I really don't like to fight or start problems, but like I said I defend myself when I have to, and it's sad.

Well, I don't know what else to say. So I'm a cut it short. I love you mamaz. One love to my bruh too.

**-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Whatever you do, don't make that decision to defend yourself because someone made you flash. Stay in control of those emotions, you want to keep the power over your actions, not the other way around. As for being a really nice person, as for the love and respect, hold on to that... remember it. Don't ever let yourself think that means "soft", because once you've done that, the system has one. There's still room for true heart, even on lock-down.

## Lil' Bruh

What's up Beat. I'm back from last week -- I told you I was gonna be here. But anyways I just heard something' good about my lil bruh. That he just got an interview. I think they accepted him, hopefully and most likely they did. So you feel me Lil bruh, I'm just sayin' like I once told you during your visit, pimp that shhh. I just want to say that I love you lil bruh, but you already know that. I'm out. Peace

**-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** No matter what happens to you in the future, your place in your brothers heart, and your influence on his actions, is solid. What are your hopes for him? In ten years, when he is in his mid-twenties, what kind of life do you want/expect him to have? What are your dreams for how he will carry on your memory and the family name?

## A Perfect Day

You're so beautiful

When you smile that's when the sun comes out.

When you are mad that's when the rain, thunder and lightening strikes.

I hate when it rains.

I hate when it thunders. I hate lighting

Mamaz, you and me

Right next to each other side by side

With a smile on your face

That to me is a perfect day

What can you say I'm in love

I love you mamaz

**-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** This is a beautiful poem. No matter what happens with you and your girl, you will always have the memories of the good days you spent together, like a secret treasure buried deep in your soul, for only you to see.

## My Special Visit

Well you feel me, my special visit was coo'. Man they even brought my mother down from camp. I got to see the people I wanted to see.

Well anyways, I asked my mom to bring me some chicken tacos, and hella shhh. The thing is that I only eat a half of taco. I don't know why, because I didn't eat any breakfast.

Man they cut my visit short because my little brother had to cut back to camp at 11:30. It was only 11:00 though. My PO lightweight was hatin' but he was hella coo'.

Man I'm just glad I got to see my love. I really love her. She said she wasn't gonna come. But she did because she loves her daddy, you feel me.

But I'm glad I seen everybody -- not everybody but you know what I mean. Well I'm 'bout to cut, so later.

**-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Maybe you didn't want the tacos because they weren't what you were really hungry for. What you were really hungry for was the way a person's soul gets fed when all their loved ones are around them, and they can just feel that vibe. We hope you get many more visits.

## Going Through A Struggle

I'm locked up in the cell.  
I'm wondering if this is hell  
No it can't be. I can't wait until I get out and until I see  
what is out there for me.  
I've been thinkin' and thinkin' and my brain is  
shrinkin'.  
I don't know what to do but act a fool.  
Do you think it's cool for me to be in pain  
and nobody could explain what I'm going through I'm  
not the one to blame.  
My life is not the same cause my in my head  
I'm really feeling dead.  
But instead I read a book and wonder when I'm gonna  
get off the hook.  
Just take a look. What did I do bad, my mom is at  
home, probably feelin' sad.  
And I'm over here really mad.  
I'm going through a struggle  
my life is like a puzzle,  
but I'm fitting into all the wrong places,  
seeing so many different faces.

**-Lil' Juney, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Picture it this way (to use your excellent metaphor)...  
when a person is working on a puzzle, they keep moving the pieces  
around until they figure out how they fit together. Maybe your life is  
like that right now - the pieces don't fit because of where you have  
them on your table. But if you moved them around, if you kept trying  
till you figured out where it all belongs, you'd find a way to make it  
right. What would you need to put the pieces of yourself in the right  
order?

## "The Hood"

The hood is our home.  
The game is our survival method.  
We use this as an excuse to do wrong.  
We know better but choose not to do right.  
Why?

To all locked up don't do better, be better, real talk.

**-Derrick, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You have a way with words! What is your plan upon  
getting out of juvenile?

## Wheazie Should Get His Own Page

Wheazie should get his own page  
He uses his own phrase  
He inherits his own ways  
He's one ancient but not of old age  
Young and full of smiles  
We can trace it for miles.

**-Wheazie Wop, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Your poems this week definitely show page-worthy  
quality, but in terms of quantity they don't take up that much space....  
still, we gave you a standout for sure, in recognition of your talent.  
One day we'll say "we knew him when"

## Taken Away

Beat what's up? This is Derrick. I would go with the  
responsibility of children. I could imagine myself like  
this, but try to protect yourself. I had unprotected sex.  
The girl calls and says she having my baby. I would  
accept the situation. I might do less hanging out and  
more commitment to the life I created. I would tell  
anyone in this place take responsibility for your actions  
and be mature.

**-Derrick, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Good advice. So easy to say, and so hard to do. How  
do you keep yourself strong?

## RIP John

Rest in Peace, 'cause you were a cool person and I hoped you  
would be there when I came out. But you are long gone now  
and I did not even get to go to your funeral. And I would not  
get to spend time with you for my 17th or 18th birthday or  
anything else.

But I knew you are watching me and our family from  
paradise. John, you lived a good life and died in a very bad  
way.

Saturday morning I called my cousin and my girl and  
they told me that John passed away. I asked how he passed  
away and I asked how he passed away, and they said in a  
car accident and they were really cryin'. I was really mad,  
wonderin' if he won't be there when I get out or on my 18th  
birthday.

I feel really sad. Rest in Peace, John

**-Lil' Juney, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** We're sorry to hear about John's passing. We hope in the  
name of John you will live a life free of incarceration.

## I Cry A Little

I thought I knew you, but... your words are false.  
You said I could buy love, it wasn't worth the cost

I have feelings too

But you worry about yours

You don't say the words and my heart hits the floor

Poor... Rich ... I'm more in the middle

Does she love me... she loves me ... not even a little

Bye my sweetheart my voice must rest

But you wouldn't love me, not even in death.

**-Wheazie-wop, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** It's a sad truth of being an artist that some of the greatest  
poetry comes from the greatest heartbreak. This is a perfect and wrenching  
blues to describe the pain of rejection. We all go through it at one point or  
another, but it takes a rare type to turn that pain into a terrific poem/flow.



## The True You

This is Derrick, Beat again. I wanna talk about someone I  
thought I knew. I thought I knew you but I guess not the only  
thing I saw was beauty, popularity and body. You led me on.  
My boys tried to tell me you was a snake. I was blinded by  
the lies. You deceived me. You hurt me deep. You punctured  
a wound in my heart. I thought you were for me. I thought I  
knew you but I was wrong.

**-Derrick, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Another tale of heartbreak! It is so hard to see the real  
person sometimes, when you are very attracted to their beauty. But you  
now have learned that hard lesson and will be smarter next time.



### A Mi Ruca

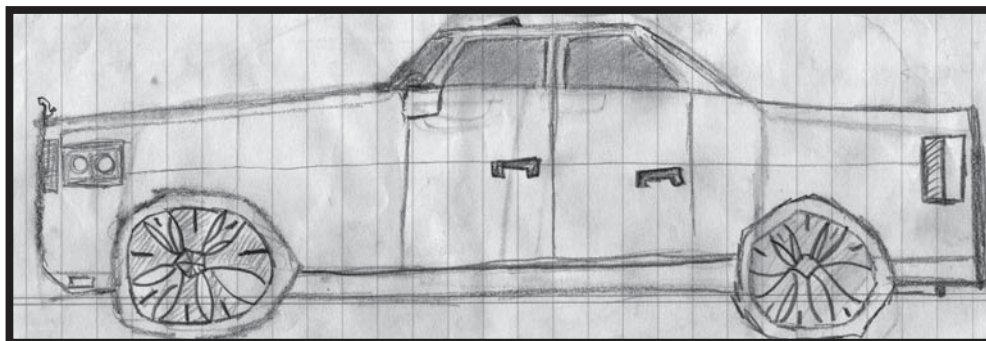
A mi ruca bonita  
Que me excita  
Yo la quiero mucho  
A mi Ana  
Niña con ojos bonitos  
Chaparrita,  
Lindo labios que  
Yo quiero besar  
Tocarte es lo que quiero mi ja  
Ya falta poquito mi amor  
Ya mero salgo de este Rancho  
Ya mero vamos a estar juntos

**From The Beat:** Entonces has lo posible para estar con esta muchacha que te tiene loco. ¿Que estas haciendo por ella?

### To My Girlfriend

To my cute girlfriend  
Who excites me  
I love her a lot  
My Ana  
Girl with cute eyes  
Short,  
Wonderful lips  
That I want to kiss  
Touch you is what I want to do, girl  
There's only a little bit more time to go, my love  
I'm about to get out of this Ranch  
We're about to be together soon.

**-A LCRS**  
**From The Beat:** So do what's possible so you can be with this girl that has you crazy. What are you doing for her?



### El Día Del Niño

Le doy gracias a Dios por todos los niños del mundo porque es un día que es muy feliz para todos los niños. Le doy gracias a Dios porque ahora le puedo dar a mi hija todos los regalos que yo no podía darles. Le doy a mis sobrinos también. Le quiero dar gracias a Dios por todo.

**From The Beat:** Los niños son muy inocentes y bonitos. Esperamos que cuando salgas, hagas lo que tienes que hacer para alegrar a esos niños que desean tener aunque sea un juguete. Se nota que tienes un buen corazón. Tú no perteneces a este lugar. Cuanda sales, no vuelvas otra vez.

### Children's Day

I give thanks to God for all the children in the world because it's a day that is very happy for all the children. I give thanks to God because now I can give my daughter all the gifts that I could not give them. I also give to my nephews, too. I want to give thanks to God for everything.

**-Darwin B4**  
**From The Beat:** Children are very innocent and cute. We hope that when you get out, you do what you have to do to bring happiness to those children who long to have at least one toy. Based on your piece, we can tell that you have a good heart. You don't belong in these kinds of places. When you get out, don't ever come back.

## SANTA CRUZ

### Freedom

Freedom is using your life, not wasting it. Being locked up is wasting it. I wasted part of my life. I'm not going to do what I did before. I'm going to get a job.

**-Gilbert**  
**From The Beat:** Good for you. What kind of job will you look for?

### I Thought I Knew You

I thought I knew you, but I guess not because you kept surprising me, every time I had you figured out. I saw things popping out that I never knew were there. But now I know that even the nicest person in the world has something to hide.

**-Nancy**  
**From The Beat:** We are indeed strange creatures, we human beings. We're the only creatures who do have secrets.

### Sometimes I Wonder

Sometimes I wonder what's going to happen to me. Am I going to die, and if I am, how? And who's going to be there. I wonder what would happen to my loved ones, especially my little brother. He wouldn't have anyone to look up to. He wouldn't have anyone to protect him. And my mom - what would she do? Her live revolves around us.

**-Andy**  
**From The Beat:** Andy, no one can know what will happen. We have to act as if we are going to be around for a while. We have to act as if what we do, how we behave, makes a difference. Chances are, it will.

### RIP

I just wanted to say a Rest In Peace to Mac Dre. On a deep level, though, not like meaningless stuff. Because listening to him opened my eyes to a lot of things. I admire the way he looked out for others and made sure his buddies got some of the spotlight, also. He brought a good connection between a lot of people. He also opened up a lot of doors for a lot of people. I think he is one of the greatest artists the world has seen.

**-S**  
**From The Beat:** What are some of the things he opened your eyes to?

### This Freedom

Freedom is to be outside of here. And it's to have freedom of speech and say what you think. And it's being out in the streets and walking the streets.

**-Anonymous**  
**From The Beat:** What else is it? And how do you earn it? And how do you keep it?

### Freedom Of Speech

My definition of freedom is being able to speak your mind, wear what you want and not have to follow commands (to a certain extent).

**-Nick**  
**From The Beat:** That's certainly part of freedom. We know you've heard this one, but it's nevertheless true that the price of freedom is responsibility. If you want freedom, however you wish to define it, you have to earn it, pay for it. Are you ready to accept the price?

### Crazy

When I'm in the same room with my enemy and I can't get him because I'll get a new charge, that's what drives me crazy.

**-C**  
**From The Beat:** We suspect you have no idea who and what the real enemy is. You think some other kid who wears a different color or comes from a different part of town is your enemy, but the reality is - you and that kid have a common enemy. It might be poverty. It might be racism. It might be unequal opportunities. It might be all of those things, but we can guarantee you - that kid you call your enemy isn't really your enemy. If you waste your energy thinking so, you're letting the real enemy off easy. Wake up. Look around you. Get real.

My definition of freedom  
is being able to speak  
your mind

### Why Do We Treat Strangers Better Than The Ones We Love?

We do this because strangers have never done anything to us and we feel we can open up to them, even when we don't know them.

**-Forest**  
**From The Beat:** Your response makes a great deal of sense. Hey, at what point does a stranger become not a stranger?

## Miss Lady

Hey miss lady, can I call you baby?  
 Dude like me been thinkin' daily!  
 I remember your walk and I follow your prints.  
 I remember your smell, you smelled like mints.  
 You had that smile that I still can see.  
 I wish Miss Lady could remember me.  
 You thought I was old but I'm so so young.  
 Thinkin' 'bout that OG love kind of got me sprung.  
 So what! So what! I'm almost eighteen!  
 I'm gonna shine for you just like oil sheen!

-Andre

**From The Beat:** Hope you win this girl's attention with your attention getting poem - love the line about following her prints. And now you're coming up on eighteen, adulthood running towards you like a bullet train. What does turning 18 mean to you - besides the added chance it gives you with this girl?

## Love To You

When I fell in love I would trust, hug, kiss and rub on you. But now that I just can't do... But if you don't want it too then eff you! But you know I still love you!

-Almac

**From The Beat:** It's so hard to get locked up away from someone you love. It's hard to trust ... but have faith that more love is coming your way, and more freedom too.

## Life For Me

Life for me is like money on a tree,  
 which could not be because money ain't on trees.  
 As long as I'm locked up I'm gonna let up,  
 but as long as I rep up  
 ninjas won't step up.

-Alex

**From The Beat:** There are many illusions in life, and we believe them! You have a poetic way with words, so we hope you keep writing for The Beat. Lastly, what is this about repping up? Isn't it because of repping you find yourself incarcerated? Think again!

## The Beat

I'm about to tell you about a fifteen-year-old youngsta livin' in Oakland. It's hard out in the streets, when you ain't got nobody to look up to.

-Kid

**From The Beat:** We all need role models, and you deserve that too! We hope The Beat can help guide you to seeing a better way. Remember it starts with you being honest to yourself.

## Let Me Be Free

If I was free I would be able to be what I want to be, but I can't, 'cause while being bad ninjas might laugh but they gonna get slapped. I don't rap and I ain't black.

-Almac

**From The Beat:** Stop thinking about everyone else, and just focus on yourself and your own freedom. There will always be haters, don't give them any power!

## Lost My Brother

What's up Beat? This is Lil' Pug, yea I got to write about all the people that I know that's gone or locked up.

First of all I got to write about my big god brother Meech. I miss him because when people ask "do I know him" I just look at them with that steel face like, "what is cousin's problem? That's my big bra, yea I know him." For all ya'll out there that know my bra, keep his name out ya'll mouth because ya'll know that if he was here right know that ya'll wouldn't even speak on him.

-Lil' Pug

**From The Beat:** We feel your pain. It's terrible how many young men have lost their lives this year! How can we stop the violence?

## Beat

What's crack-a-lackin' with y'all. This is Curioso from Hayward. Anyways, I'm chillin' in here doing time. I got to court on November 29. And hopefully, I pray to God that I get a release to ROP or do my time here until I'm eighteen. Because they are tryin' to send me to CYA, but if they do, I ain't even trippin'. It's only one year.

To all locked up, keep yo 'heads up.

-Curious George

**From The Beat:** Since you're not trippin' can we trip for you? Because we do, you know. This time in the Y won't mean anything if you don't use it to grow up and grow out of the gang lifestyle that got you in here to begin with. You have an incredible positive energy to you - and leadership qualities as well... it would be terrible to see that energy snuffed out by the system and by continuing to get caught up. Help us stop trippin': tell us about your positive plan for the future.

## My Thoughts

My thoughts in this cell ain't nothing but hell but as long as I stay up I might get sprayed up by the system. They don't play when it comes to games, so as long as you pray you might get paid by the game!

-Almac

**From The Beat:** We hope you don't get sprayed! As for praying that you might get paid by the game? What are you saying? What game is this?

## I Though I Knew You, But...

I thought I knew you...  
 When I first met you  
 But now that I know  
 I don't act like I know you  
 I wish I could love you like I knew you  
 But now I don't know you or trust you

-Almac

**From The Beat:** Ouch! Thanks for sharing a story we can all relate to.

## Q-Vole

Beat what's up with it. Just writing to say was up and sending a couple of saludos.

First of all to my baby mama who is three months pregnant, that I love her with all my corazon. And to keep her head up. Also to all that are locked-up.

Well alratos

-Gustavo

**From The Beat:** Wow, in six months you'll be a father! Next week, write up a little on how that makes you feel, and what kind of a future you want to provide for your child!

## Berzerk

Why do I cry, why do I get told so many lies  
 Why do I go through so much pain  
 It's like I'm going insane,  
 Why are the walls come in on me,  
 I can hear my family calling me,  
 Why do I do the things I do, mom's keeps telling me  
 Karma's an itch,  
 Why wouldn't I just listen to her?  
 Now I'm in the Hall going berzerk

-Darryl

**From The Beat:** You're in the hall but it doesn't sound as if you're going berzerk at all. It sounds like instead you're facing the hard reality of lockdown, and (we hope) promising yourself to never let yourself get caught up in it again. Which is, even though it doesn't feel like it right now.

## One More Thing

If you was to leave me there's no telling what I'll do  
 I'll run a thousand miles just to be with you  
 I know we can make it through these hard times  
 So baby let me know you will always be mine.  
 So with this said I'll never let you go  
 But there's one more thing I thought you should know.  
 Isabel, I love you with all my heart.

-Funk

**From The Beat:** The love burns strong in this heartfelt poem. What will be different this next time around? What is your plan for the future? After you get through these "hard times" what comes next? Lay it out in your next poem!

## I'm Fed Up

I don't like it in here. It's so boring you try to sleep but that's about it. You can't 'cause food taste like shhh, so when you cry you wanna die but can't because you try and try.

-Almac

**From The Beat:** We know those lonely nights in the hall are hard! But this is just a moment in time. Focus on how you're going to stay free after you're released, make a plan.

## Hyphy Movement

I'm frontin' to tell you about the Hyphy Movement and how we go eighteen dummy to the music we go to. Hyphy we go stupid on AC Transit but if you know that's how we go dumb and go.

-Javier

**From The Beat:** What does the Hyphy Movement mean to you? Is it just fun? Or does it symbolize freedom? Or is its uniqueness to the Bay that you love? Or is it rebellion? Tell us what it means to you to go dumb - because we know you aren't dumb.

## "Saefeezy In A Life Of Struggle"

I was once a thug that lived my life.  
 Strugglin' through pain, but I still made it through this night.  
 Use to be thinking about me and my homeboy's, getting down,  
 Ridin' fast like a NASCAR,  
 boys be trippin about a girl but I'm like forget her.  
 Lil' Kev, I hope you eatin right up there in the "Y",  
 but you know Lil' Saefeezy got' the game pimped tight,  
 "Brah" you know we was raised from a ghetto family where other rich families used to talk about me,  
 but I'm ain't givin' a damn,  
 'cause we gonna make it to the top,  
 bein' true  
 stayin' solid as rocks,  
 still after me and my brother's time we ain't gonn let a penny drop!  
 Now and still tryin' to live my life to the fullest and ain't givin up.  
 'cause ain't nobody 'bout to be the best of us!

-Lil' Saefeezy

**From The Beat:** What does it mean to you to live life to its fullest? What rich families spoke about you? And how do you have the "game pimped tight?" Paint a picture for The Beat, of a full life. Appreciate your contribution. Also tell us how you envision a life free of incarceration.

## What's Up Beat ?

What it do everybody? This ya' boy Lil' Youngin keeping it solid. I'm fresh off med ops in intake control. I had a fever with the chills so I was twisted feel me. They will let me out on this program, no more group homes, they realized that don't work for me 'cause me and my mom hustled for that. I'm gonna be free soon.

-Lil' Youngin

**From The Beat:** We hope you take your freedom seriously enough to take advantage of it. By taking advantage we mean realizing that you're not always going to get second chances—stay off the streets and protect yourself; educate yourself.

### Living When The Life You Know Is Taken Away

If I had to change my life in any way I would have someone to help me live through everything.

If I brought someone in this world I would have to get a job and keep myself together. I would stop slacking. I would have to get everything together.

-Donzale

**From The Beat: We hope you can get it together BEFORE you bring a new baby into the world. Having a baby is a lot of work, and stressful for a young person. Find that sense of purpose inside yourself, don't ask a baby to carry it for you.**

### TV Is King!

I wish I could watch my TV, but instead I have to be in here behind the door listening to staff watching the football game. I want to watch TV! I want to watch Nickelodeon, Disney, Cartoon network, USA, TNT!

-Larry

**From The Beat: What's your favorite thing about TV? For a lot of people it's just that it's a distraction, a way to get away from reality. What is it for you? Tell us about the shows you watch? Do you watch Raven? Spongebob?**

### Keep It Movin'

What's up wit' it, Beat! This the homeboy, Lil' Shammmy from Hayward, just wanna give a shout out to all that's doing time and that's reading this shhh. Just keep it solid and knock out that time that you doing, 'cause we need you out there in the outs!

When some sucka-ass ninja come talking all that J-cat trash, just keep it movin'! As long as they don't disrespect or put they' hands on you, then it's nothing. Y'all should know what time it is. "Death before dishonor" and "loyalty above all lost" will get you far in this game. So if you continue to play (the game), better be able to accept all the bad things along wit' the little bit of good things that come.

And to whoever (The Beat Within staff) commented on my last Beat Within piece (I was under the name lil' Mocos), you said I got The Beat Within twisted 'cause I gave a shout out to some homies and that I was using the Beat to glorify my gang — but nah, I think y'all got yo'self twisted. Straight up! If y'all can print East Oakland, West Oakland, North Oakland, and Town Bizzness shhh.. then y'all should have no problem printing some Hayward type shhhh!

-Lil' Shammmy

**From The Beat: You're right that none of that should be printed when it is clearly a gang reference or refers to gangster-type activity, unless it's in a piece that's showing a change of heart just as clearly — in which case, yes, we print might print it not to glorify what it represents but precisely to demystify (demythologize) it from one homie to another on the same turf as well as any other turf. In other words, if the piece calls out for peace, then it turns it all around. You feel? And if you have problems with these comments take them up with the guy with the gray chin hair who not only writes the comments but makes sure you get your words in our pages each week. We've known, respected and come to care deeply about many gangsters from Hayward (and not all banging the same side, let alone the same side of town). We understand and respect your love for the homies you grew up with, but when you tie it up with calling out turf, it's not just about love but hate as well, and riding and killing and so-called patrolling — and we are so tired of seeing y'all do this to each other it's a miracle we still show up to workshops week after week and continue to print your words in The Beat. And if you can't see the love in that but think we got it twisted, oh well — we solemnly refuse to endorse the rules of hell. So, yes, we "remixed" a few of your words again, but we left plenty we strongly disagree with, too, or at least in the application intended by you, such as "death before dishonor" — the courage it takes to break with this third-generation bloodbath of a brown civil war, deserves the highest honor we can imagine — because enemies still want to see you dead, and so-called friends do, too, but you have the courage to be true to you and God's commanding truth: You shall not kill — let alone Jesus' living proof of God's Will: Love your mother, your father and your enemy, too! And that's what refusing to participate in this civil (drug) war proves. Peace. Oh, one last note: we appreciate your message to keep it movin', not for our sake but the sake of every reader of The Beat.**

### Seeing The Freedom Light, Again

What's up, Beat! Man, I'm back in the Hall for the fourth time. I would have been out of this prison, but my mom kept hatin', talking 'bout she don't want me home. All I want to say is, when I get this release, I'm staying out and never coming back, and that the truth is, I can't wait until Friday when I get my release and say, "Bump the Hall" and walk out this place free again.

Well, that's all Beat. You know I got to show y'all mad love and respect.

-Lil' Bobby

**From The Beat: We have mixed feelings about your piece: On one hand, we're disappointed to read that this is your fourth time getting locked up. However, we're also glad to hear that this stint was a brief. Nevertheless, one day behind bars is one day too many. What makes you feel so confident that you will never be seeing these kinds of places again? We bet you said these same words the other times you got out, too. Why do you think your mother doesn't want you home?**

### Locked up.

Every day I just think about coming out but it's going to be the last time writing to you guys I'm out.

'Till next time Beat.

-Leonardo

**From The Beat: Is it your last time writing because you're getting out? Best of luck to you...**

### I Underestimated You

i thought i knew you but when i really needed someone you were right there for me when i needed someone you were right there by my side i really thought i knew you until i was by myself and you came to help me out when i really needed someone in my corner i'm glad i know you now

-Big Sterl

**From The Beat: That's the meaning of the old phrase: "A friend in need, is a friend indeed." Someone who shows up for you when you're the one in need of help, is a real friend. Those folks who post with you when you're on top of your game but disappear when you fall into trouble and pain, prove they are not real friends. That's the meaning of "fair weather friends".**

### Wronged

i thought i knew you but you did me wrong

-The One

**From The Beat: Look at your part in what happened, too, 'cause that's the part you have control over in the future.**

### Living When The Life You Know Is Taking Away!

Let me start of by sayin' I don't think I could live with knowin' I took a loss like that, so I got to bounce back. Got to get back on my toes, stop messin' with females. Gotta get that money not even in the wrong way.

Oakland my birth place, I came up over there. You swear it's like hell but if you live in that way you bound to get smacked stuntin' on mine. Be on you back. The next ninja hatin' on you because he sees how your pockets are getting fat.

-Lil' Dizil

**From The Beat: We hear what you want to stop doing, but what are you gonna start doing? Even a brave man needs a plan.**

### Why I'm Here

I am in here because I was at the wrong place at the wrong time. I got caught because I was accused of stealing a car and then attacked some one.

When I first came in I was real home sick, after days go by I got a little used to it.

This is a place that can't feel like home. When I heard my court day was near I was happy. Then I realized the charges they have against me. I'm hoping the judge will let me go home on house arrest or something.

In my room at night I think about home and my parents. My only goal in here is to get out.

To me I'm guessing I'm doing two more weeks and get release on EM or some thing. This is what happened to me so far in juvenile hall.

-First time

**From The Beat: We're glad you want to get out so badly—does that mean that when you're out you'll stay out? How will you manage to have a different story than so many of your peers, the ones who say they're never coming back but always do? We believe you can do it, but in the end it's up to you.**

### I Thought I Knew You, But...

I thought I knew you but I don't.

I can't keep my eyes off you because I got to watch my back, stay packed with this gat.

Got to look over my shoulder every sec'

'cause I want to do good and finally leave the hood. I can't stand no scandalous girls trying to take me down.

I got to stay strong.

-Lil' Dizil

**From The Beat: It sounds like there's so much stress in your life — you don't know who to trust. We know you can stay strong. Keep telling The Beat how it is. And do not forget action speaks louder than words, so put your game plan together!**

### I Thought I Knew You

I thought I knew you, but you say that you want to be with another boy, but I thought I knew you because you was my lady, but I guess that I don't. Now you know, but I would like for you to say that you knew me with all my heart, but I hope that you could stand up with respect, but now, you want me to give you my trust and you say that you know me, but I say that I want another chance with you because I still love you and I want another chance.

-John

**From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your loss. However, if this girl does not want to be with you, then that's her loss. There are plenty of fish in the sea, so don't settle for something you don't like or someone who takes your love for granted. Breaking up is hard, but who knows? Maybe the next girl in your life will be everything you're looking for in a girlfriend! You won't know unless you give it a chance!**

### My Definition Of Freedom

My definition of freedom is being at home with me, myself, and my pearl, watching TV or playing a video game.

-DeAndre

**From The Beat: If this is your definition of freedom, then so be it. Anything beats just sitting behind bars, right? What is your plan to succeed. We know how you chill, but you also need to stay busy!**



## Reality

I see reality smile at me, but I just mug.  
Living the lifestyle of a thug,  
so in my fantasy, I let my purple cure medicate me  
'till I can't see  
'cause I'll never know if I'll be here tomorrow,  
so I'll never sign a contract resigning sorrow,  
so this feeling, you can't borrow  
when you don't know ya' girl, fo' sure.

-Lil' Cheech

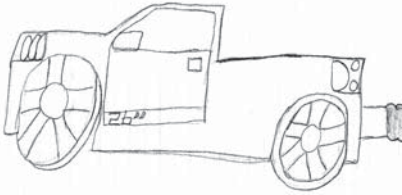
**From The Beat:** You're damn straight on that: Tomorrow is not promised for anybody. However, living the lifestyle of a thug hurts, not helps, your chances of seeing tomorrow. Why do you mug at reality? Could it be because you don't like what you see? If this is the case, you only have one person to blame for the way you're life is unraveling, and that's you. The good thing, though, is you still have plenty of time to change the things you don't like about your life. Are you up for the task?

## Have To Go To Placement

when i found out  
that i was going to have to go to placement  
from my mama during one of her visits  
in the month of november  
i was concerned but not too troubled  
because i thought i could get out of the situation  
even after she told me that  
i didn't believe it was going to go down like that

-Anonymous

**From The Beat:** If you do end up going to placement, remember to keep your feet on the ground — and don't mess up. Believing that you can always get out of whatever situation, is probably what put you in the situation you're in — facing placement. Stay strong.



## What's Being Locked Up?

Being locked up is, you can't do what you want to do. It's not being free. You can't be with yo' family and friend, but most of all, my grandma and grandpa. RIP.

-Jesus

**From The Beat:** We're sorry to hear about the loss of your grandparents. However, if they were still alive, do you think they would be happy to know you're locked up? You never know when it's going to be a person's time to go, so instead of spending your time behind bars, spend it with the people you love before it's too late.

## Not Ron Ron

not ron ron is what i said  
when they murdered him  
now leon locked up in y a  
lil' man gone for fifteen years  
everybody goin' to jail  
but that's all right  
i'm still holdin' it down  
we still out here doin' it

-Adanté

**From The Beat:** You're tripping! You're not out anywhere, you're in juvenile hall. Maybe you're making plans to go back to the same stupid stuff that's getting your best friends killed and sent away for double-digit sentences, but it's more like volunteering for lock down than it is holding anything down. It's time to wake up and change your ways while some of you are still around! Okay?

## Freedom

My definition of freedom is being able to go to a real school  
and go to sleep when I want.

Most importantly be able to be with my family and that's it.

-Lil' E

**From The Beat:** So, when you do regain your freedom, will you protect it by doing what you need to do? Will you go to school and spend time with your family in order to stay off the streets? We think you know the right answer.

## I Thought I Knew You, But I Don't.

What's good everybody, this little Kj. Ya boy got in a fight from mistaken identity. That shhh was dumb and not coo'. I had risked my life by running down the block. I was about like ready to stay off the block.

-Lil' Kj

**From The Beat:** Not cool is right—look where it got you. Fighting is rarely the answer, and using weapons is an especially bad way to resolve conflict. Haven't enough of the youth died from senseless violence? We see too many faces on t-shirts and wonder when people are going to use their minds instead of bullets...

## What it Do?

What it do in my old unit? This is your ninja Dee aka Stewie! The block miss you but you is not missed. Man, it's the same ol' shhh! I thought I was missing something, but I wasn't. I just got back in this mo'fo' for a piss test!

It' cool brah. I miss you brah! We go hard, just the two of us — ninjas get mad by seeing us together! You feel me, brah-brah? We go hard in the paint! I miss you. I seen the white girl, Melissa, at court about a month ago, and that's when I heard you was in the hall.

You should be on the block getting money. You feel me? I got some girls on line when we get out. It' gonna be loving, non-stop, brah! You know what I mean? To all them weak-ash ninjas that hate on us, forget them! Then it' all money for us! Money for life! I love you, brah.

-Stewie

**From The Beat:** It doesn't seem like you haven't learned much from getting locked up — you plan to go right back to the block, get high and commit crimes. You know where that is going to lead: jail or death. So why you wanna go there? And even though you say you love your "brah", you seem content to lead him down that same dead-end street that already has shackles on his feet. How much money you two making in here? Money on the grind is fast — gone as fast as it comes, along with your freedom!

## How I'm Living

What's good in the 'hood, Beat? Me, I don't have no clue 'cause I been locked up for sixty-one days — holdin' it down. Feel me? Seen a lot of people that I mess with on the outs. It kinda made me hot. Feel me? We all can't be getting locked up!

But yeah though, the judge gave me another one of them chances! So I might be goin' to R O P (Rites of Passage) or a group home. Moms been stayin' solid with me, comin' on the weekends — holdin' it down! So I'm 'bout to try to pimp this program. That's about it.

So all doin' time — stay solid! Times get better.

-Dell

**From The Beat:** Times get better when you make better decisions out there. We're not saying life is fair or even that you deserve what happened to you or all your friends locked up, but we are saying that if you don't want your moms coming to see you in jail, you need to change the decisions you're making on the outs. We don't mean try to get slicker, because you always get caught for something or rather, sooner or later, whether it's a snitch or bad luck or whatever. We're saying don't just pimp your program and go back to the same old same, use your program to help you start on a new path that does lead to the same old pain.

## This Is My Definition Of Freedom

My definition of freedom is being at home wit' my family, layin' wit' some pearl, or I can be getting money wit them young money ninjas.

Freedom is important because with out freedom, you fell like a locked up animal.

-Young Money

**From The Beat:** How do you and them "young money ninjas" be getting y'all money? Is it illegal? It's funny how sometimes the things than benefit us can also hurt us. Getting money with them "young money ninjas" may be your idea of freedom, but if you get caught making it illegally, that same fun can land you behind bars. If you had to choose between the two, which one would you chose?

## I Thought I Knew You But...

when a real critical situation came our way you didn't have my back, you wasn't there for me and you still ask me why i treat you this way man, leave — now i know who to count on when danger comes my way and it is a lesson i'll never forget

-Anonymous

**From The Beat:** If you really care for this person, why not try to work it out? Everyone makes mistakes. Either way, it would be a lot more useful for you to look at the part you played in creating the situation. Some of the decisions that seemed to you so natural you made them without thinking — were actually mistakes! It's fine to remember the mistakes of others, but it's not cool when you remain blind to your own. Before you judge and hold a grudge, clean house in your own dome. If somebody else did to you the things you've brought on yourself, it might not be good for their health. All we're saying is: Look to yourself before you blame someone else.

## RIP Lil' Will

seems like yesterday we was on the spot rollin' gettin' it at a young-ass age couldn't nobody tell us nothin' you was fifteen, i was twelve but it was something different about you brah it just seems like you was older i guess they call it ahead of your time now you gone, it seems like a piece of me is gone but i'm still getting keeping it solid holdin' you down and it ain't gon' stop not on our block

-Junnie

**From the Beat:** Sorry to hear about your friend. Sounds like you two were close. Perhaps his life will be lived through you, but our advice is to put the streets down and pick yourself up — 'cause if he's living through you, he doesn't need to die twice or stay coming in and out of lock up for the rest of your natural life.

## Pimp This

what it do beat  
i'm getting out next week  
to a group home  
i'm 'bout to pimp this  
and go on with life  
on the outside.

-Lil' Freddy

**From the Beat:** If by "pimp this" you mean to handle your business and overcome all the problems in your life — great! But if you mean, you'll fake following rules and behaving responsibly until you can get back out on the street to your old life — oh no! Go back to that and you'll come back to this, and that means the system is pimping you.

### My Real Homies And The Fake Ones

i thought i knew you but you played me real bad  
i thought you were my homie but you end up  
snitching on me when the cops stopped us in that stolen car  
you said that i let you drive it because i was too drunk to drive  
i thought you had my back like you said you did  
but now i know that you don't because you let me down  
but it's okay because now i realize what kind of friends i have  
and it's cool because when i get out  
you ain't going to hear from me no more  
and how i really know that the only real homie i have is dimples  
and i say this because you said you were one of them

-Pony

**From The Beat:** With no disrespect to Dimples, you're not drawing the right conclusion from what happened. It's probably a good idea that you stay away from that ex-friend, but you're not seeing deeply enough if you just blame it all on him. You've got to stop doing this stupid stuff, like stealing cars. Sure, you can get away with it, what — a hundred times before you get caught? Or you can get caught next time you do it. Why roll the dice with your freedom and your life. Square up enough to live right and stay free. Don't blame a player but the game — quit and go legit!

### I Thought I Knew Her But Thank Goodness It's Over

I thought I knew this girl and thought she was wifey, but her brain was hyphy. I just knew one day she would have my baby, till one day, she started acting shady. Now I'm crazy 'cause no more girls will get a chance, I'm through wit' relationships that you can dance. The cold part about it, she bopped my patnas. Now her insides having problems, but me, I ain't no sucka for love 'cause she lost a stunna. Now, she got kinkier buds.

-Stank

**From The Beat:** It appears to us that you have moved on. We're sorry to hear that the girl you thought was going to be the mother of your child was not the same person whom you thought she was. However, we're glad to hear that y'all didn't have a child because look at the both of you: You're locked up and she's messing with hella dudes? Is that the kind of home who want to have for your child? Do you think you'll ever have children? What do you think it takes to be a good father? Do you have those same qualities in you?

### Freedom

What is freedom? It's when you can be with yo' family, go and have fun with your family and friends, and go where you want to go without having to trip, but doing what you got to do to be free from being locked up, and that's what freedom is to me.

-Jesus

**From The Beat:** What do you have to do in order to be free from being locked up? Do you think you can make it happen? Why or why not?

### I Lost My Dad

i lost my dad in two thousand  
'cause of a gun fight in san francisco  
i miss my dad so much

-Chris

**From the Beat:** We are so sorry to hear about your dad. We're certain that he would not want you to live and die the way he did. What you should do now is fix your life till you are one hundred per cent legit. Then live a long, good, healthy life as a tribute to your father's memory and love.

### My Definition Of Freedom

My definition of freedom is eating, sleepin' in my own bed with my girlfriend, having a good time, and watching a good movie.  
Then, play my video game,  
eat some more food,  
and just have a good night with my girl.  
Freedom is needed in everybody's life.

-Anthony

**From The Beat:** Not bad at all. However, what you need to do is focus on getting this obstacle in your life over with as soon as possible so you can be reunited with your girlfriend. Do you think she is a positive or negative influence on you? We hope the relationship is healthy and safe too. Stay safe and protect your self from bringing a youngsta into this world!

### I Thought I Knew You

I thought I knew you, but you backstabbed me. People say blood is thicker than water or girls come and go, but family is always there. If you was really my family, you wouldn't had done what you done. You took advantage of our brother-ness. You chose your lady over your boys.

-Vietnamese

**From The Beat:** What is so messed up about your family member choosing his lady over his boys? Do you know this girl? If you do, do you think she is a positive or negative influence on this family member? Why do you think your family member chose his lady over his boys? Wake up young man, 'cause where you are sitting isn't cool or pretty!

### My Definition Of Freedom

My definition of freedom is when you get to do what you want to do; nobody can't tell you nothing. You can just do what you want to do.  
The end. That's how I feel about it.

-Anthony

**From The Beat:** Thanks for sharing your thoughts on this topic with us! However, we have a question to ask you: Even if you are free, can you really do whatever the heck you want to do? What do you think life would be like if people were allowed to do whatever the heck they wanted?

### What Is Your Definition Of Freedom?

My definition of freedom is doin' what I want to, goin' to the bathroom when I want to.  
I don't like when people tell me what to do. When to eat, sleep, and shhh. I want to do those things when I want and in privacy.

-Garland

**From The Beat:** Your words echo those of so many young men before you. How can you ensure your freedom will never be taken away from you again?

### What Is Your Definition Of Freedom?

My definition of freedom is that if you are free, you shouldn't be told what you can do or not do. If you are free, you could go places and do things everybody can do, but if you are a kid, you can barely do anything, but you should because of freedom.

-Steven

**From The Beat:** Is this the first time your freedom has been taken away from you? If so, how does it feel? What kinds of things do you feel kids should be allowed to do that they are currently not allowed to do? Steven, we hope you learn from this experience and you use it to make yourself a better person than the one you were before coming to this place.

### I Thought I Knew You But I Was Wrong

your insides speak nothing but badness  
but it seemed as beautiful as a gospel song  
for you i would have gave my life  
until i found out you would've taken it  
with a stab to my heart with a stab of a knife  
with your triffin' success you were destined for  
but my mind was strong so it really did not matter  
even though inside i feel there's something missing  
i thought i knew you but i was wrong

-Demille

**From The Beat:** We feel your feelings, but you tease us with what you are and are not revealing. What was the trifling success that brought her happiness and you distress? And what was her badness — simple selfishness? Or did she misrepresent her true feelings for you, while she'd lie, cheat and mistreat you?

### Nightmare

i was so high one night and i fell asleep  
playing grand theft auto vice city  
and this what i dreamed about  
i thought i knew you but i guess i don't  
you let somebody run up on you and say you don't want funk  
we squad thick and we ready  
you could bring it to me if you want  
i ain't gon' run i ain't gone run i ain't gone hide  
i'm gone stand my ground 'til the day i die  
all these ninjas think i'm soft  
they could run up on me and try  
i'm gon' run over that ninja like he ain't even there  
when i pull out that banger  
they gone scream  
and then i wake up

-Lil' Tb

**From The Beat:** Sad to say you still have not awakened from thinking that way. Yeah, these fools in here may test you day and night, and they may think you're soft and so you swear you're ready to fight. Then you throw in some gun talk, threatening to shoot and kill — and you write all this from a maximum security cell! What will it take to make you awake? Facing an L in a Pelican Bay security housing unit (SHU) cell? There's no place for this kind of talk in our pages, 'cause it's this kind of thought that puts young men in cages and early graves. It's this mentality that will make you the system's slave, still talking like a sav' tryin' a prove you're brave. Do you have the courage to wake up and change? You need a check up from the neck up, and some fresh ideas in that GTA vicious brain — 'cause real life is not a computer game.

### Still Locked Up

what up beat  
it be the one and only tonic  
i'm cool but still locked up  
can't wait till i get out  
so i can be with my family again  
and so i can take care of my mom  
so all right beat  
that's all on my mind right now  
so till next time, late

-Tonic

**From The Beat:** Remember what is in your heart right now, so you can follow your heart when you get out. But you may still have to do some thinking about — like realizing that hustling money on the spot to help moms will backfire on you and moms both if you're committing crimes, or realizing that to stay out with your family you'll need to change how you spend your time, day and night.

## Every Little Thing About You

I thought I knew you, but once I got locked up, you changed. I mean I know you! You the one I love! I know yo' name and say it over and over everyday. Lara, you the girl I wanna be with, but I don't know a lot of things about you — the simple things. In the end though, I will know every little thing about you! And the same for you with me.

-Lara's Boy

**From The Beat: You know, so much of love is caring about the little things, the simple things your loved one does everyday. But now, promise you won't go back to your old game, 'cause getting locked up is a big thing and unnecessary pain and strain.**

## Fit The Description

I want to know why we fit the description....

We fit the description, because we are meant to go to jail (blacks and brown). We are the police's main targets: White tee, black hoodie, beanie, and gold teeth. We aren't meant to succeed. We are meant to kill ourselves. The police have a perspective that we are all good for nothing but committing crimes, and not getting nowhere in life.

-Juan

**From The Beat: Other people are blind to the invisible chains that bind them – but you can see them. You've heard the expression, "The more you know, the more you owe?" Knowing what you do about the way the world is, you have a responsibility, a calling, to fight and change it. Your words are those of a teacher, a leader... will you live up them, to the promise that lies within you?**

## What Will Happen?

I can't think of anything on the subject to write about, 'cause all I can think about is the food on the outs, and my family and my girl wondering how she is and how my family are. Who is taking care of my mom, what is she thinking about me being locked up, and my girl, what she might be thinking about me? What she would I do when I get out, what will I do.

All I wanna do is get out now and move on with my life. so I can get the best of life and to all the others locked-up, stay up.

-Lil' Muk

**From The Beat: You start off by saying that you don't know what to write about, but it turns out you do... you have a library's worth of important things on your mind: Your mom, your girl, love, fear, the future, your dreams, the others who are locked up... and of course, all that good food waiting for you when you get out. Good work, dipping in and finding your subject matter.**

## Have Hope

From yo' boy Deezy baby -- and don't forget to say the baby -- man if I am not gettin' there with this shhh ...the same shh every day and ninjas talk shhh every now and then, and I just say don't talk about it because I'm not a talk person, you feel me? I get down to the fullest, but I'm still waiting on this lil' court date to see what's up. Hopefully they keep me as a lil' juvenile and don't go up on me, 'cause I'm not ready for that you dig?

But anyway I hope it works out for yo' boy. I'm hoping, wishing, praying to God to get me through this. I hope I beat my case so I can get out and change my whole life around me. I know I can do it.

So all I can do right now is hope.

-Lil' Rome

**From The Beat: We know you can do it too, Lil' Rome, if it's something you really want. What would it take to make that happen? Forget about the case for a minute, whether you get out sooner or you get out later, you'll still be out one day, and then it will be up to you to keep the promise you just made to yourself to turn it all around. We know you have the desire, and the ability, but what we're waiting to hear about now is the strategy. How do you intend to change your life around?**

## Freedom Is a Lot of Responsibility

My definition of freedom is being able to live how you want to, being able to make your own choices. I used to live wit' my auntie, and I couldn't wait to be out on my own.

Now that I got my own apartment, I am on my own. The freedom is good, but it's a lot of responsibility, too. For example, if I don't have food, I got to go buy some, and I can't go back to my auntie and be like, I need this or I need that.

Since I chose to leave my auntie's house, I got to do for myself. And I think that's a weak move to run back to her. So I don't. This is my definition of freedom.

-Young Weezy

**From The Beat: We didn't print your "I thought I knew you, but you snitched" piece. For one thing, you threaten to hurt him after your release, and that would be a crime. You feel? But this piece is something else again. Yes, freedom is a lot of responsibility — but the responsibility doesn't begin and end with paying bills, buying your own food, etc. To stay free, you are responsible for your behavior, too. And especially after you've been registered in the system, you need to get legal pay. And running around looking for revenge — no way! That's like making a reservation for a bed back in the system, and you sound like a young man who values his freedom!**

## Why Jail Sucks

Being in jail sucks because you're locked in your room and there ain't nothin' to do except read a lot and work out. I finished a book already named "Monster." It's a good book, but being locked up sucks, because I miss my family and friends. When I first got here I was a little bit scared because it was my first time, but now I'm cool. I'm keeping my head up and being strong. I just hope I get out because I miss the outs.

-Anthony

**From The Beat: You wrote this on your first week here, by now we hope you're a little more used to it, but not used to it enough to come back. Keep reading and feeding your mind, and most of all don't forget how wrong it is in here, so that when you are released, stay out!!!**

## Ain't No Tellin'

I'm in here, hella mad ain't no telling what the DA is trying to say I did and ain't no telling what's going to happen to me. I'm goin' to get through this by the end of the summer and that means to win both of my cases. I been prayin', hopin' God hear me and come through for me.

-G

**From The Beat: We hope your prayers are answered, but then what? If you get that second chance, what will you do with it? That's what we'd love to know.**

## ROP or the Y

This Thursday the judge is goin' to decide if I go to ROP or the Y, but if I do go to ROP I got to cut my dreads off and my shhh is hella long. I been growin' it for a minute now, I'm not trippin' though, I'm tryin' to get out this joint. It could go the other way around, and I can't go to the Y.

If I do the judge is talkin' about sending me for two years, but it's good -- whatever happens I'm going to stay solid and do my time. I'm out.

-David

**From The Beat: You know the story of Samson from The Bible, right? He was a hero, and his strength was in his hair, so they cut off his hair and it made him weak and a prisoner — but then his hair grew back and he was able to win a great victory for the side of good. Your hair will grow back too — and more importantly, you will be older, stronger, and — we pray — wiser, so that you will never make yourself a prisoner of the system,**

## Bout' Life

I'm thinking about life. Sometimes you really can't help but realize that hey — shhh happen: bullshhh, dumb shhh, you name it! When it does, some people are prepared for it and already have plans in the works and the game. Others simply stand there, confused as to how shhh happen, wondering why is it that it smelled so bad.

But sometimes we up in this game and you can't play like you having fun, because these streets is like a jungle in which all creatures should be aware of the fact that some of us are predators. Like they say, life is a bummer and then you die.

Ninjas be askin' questions and shhh, make you feel like you always got somebody to tell that story to that no one else would ever believe. But some, we have to stop our game. That just something I learned when I was up in B-unit as a lil' boy, just some wisdom going out to my real ninjas 'cause them fake people ain't going to know what I am talking about.

The real know who the real is. So I want you to know that I keep this real to the fullest, and I don't mess with these dudes that act like a female that always crying. You know what I'm talking about!

-Choyce

**From The Beat: Maybe the most important thing about real recognizing real, is that when the real choose to stop, they really do it. And then his real peoples see that it's possible to say that you mean to do it and actually get through. 'Cause so many will never say it, thinking that if they fail like all the fakes who say it and never really mean to do, then they'll look fake, too. So it's up to someone who's real to prove that when he says he's going to stop, that's exactly what he'll do.**

## Unbreakable

I want to know why my ninjas gotta die  
I want to know why it's always by homicide  
I want to know why dead ain't alive.

i want to know why you got to carry a gun to survive.

I want to know why people die by knives.

I want to know why ninjas be snitchin;

I want to know why we cook in the kitchen

I want to know why I so unbreakable

I want to know why I'm so faithful

I already know why, 'cause I'm solid.

-Billitant

**From The Beat: What does solid mean to you? We know what it means out in the street, but we're curious about what it means to you in the context of this poem. Does it mean you don't "snitch"? Does it mean you are brave in a fight? Or does it mean you are faithful to yourself — and you will keep the promise to yourself to "never come back?"**

## Hating on Me

Why the staff want to hate on me

They know I'm a G, so let me be

Every time I say something

They wanna get on me.

When I go bad

Then they really on my ass

But now I'ma just be cool

Cause I ain't no damn fool

I need my freedom, and I need to see my family  
'cause without them I'm nothing, 'cause the staff gon' hate,

So I'ma stay out the way

I'ma keep me mouth shut -- so I won't be on that bus to you know what.

-Lil' Suave

**From The Beat: We're glad you're over this rough patch, you have enough stress on you, between your case and your future, and your family, that you don't need to also let that other stuff get to you. Keep your mouth shut, breathe deep, remember who and what matters to you, and ride it out... (and then do like you did— and you know we're gonna say this of course — WRITE OUT THE STRESS and GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST!)**



### From Lock Up

i thought i knew you  
but you lied  
and set me up  
my definition of freedom  
is not being here

-Anonymous

**From The Beat:** When you point one finger at another, three fingers are pointing back at you. You set yourself up, too.

### Hate

everywhere you go  
ninjas is gon' hate  
but they can do that  
because it makes me great  
it just let' me know  
you want what i got  
but that's how  
so many people get shot

-Lil' Eli

**From The Beat:** The whole circle of what you've written in this little rhyme, both the hating and the old answer you offer one more time — players and haters keep switching up masks, and there's no telling who's going to get blast. Neither a player nor a hater be, 'cause bullets are too fast: one dies, one goes to the penitentiary. Quit the game and live long, safe and free.



### Right Now

i'm on thin water  
what i'm gon' do wit'out a father  
them white boys  
sho' make times harder  
but i gotta make a change  
that purple and that drank  
got my mind insane

-Lil' Damani

**From The Beat:** So this is what we could print from your last three pieces. Do you really think we want to print pieces that glorify the irresponsible use of guns? We agree that you need to change, and that the way you're thinking is insane. Don't know what we can do to help except listen to your pain and try to understand what you're saying about losing your father and walking on thin water.

### I Ain't Comin' Back

I'm tired of people telling me what to do  
I'm tired of people telling me what I say ain't true  
I'm tired of people telling me how long I got to do  
I'm tired of people telling me jail is where I live  
I'm tired of people telling me I ain't got a heart to give  
I'm tired of people telling me when to shoot back  
I'm tired of people telling me I need to quit selling sacks  
I'm tired of people telling me to be a playa and a mack  
I'm tired of people telling me how to act  
I'm tired of people telling me I'm going to stay in jail.  
I ain't comin' back.

-Billitant

**From The Beat:** We haven't seen you since you first wrote this poem, so what we're hoping is that you're back in the free world now, and that you are taking that heart we know you have and using it to stay strong and keep yourself out of jail. We'll miss you, but if it means never seeing you locked up again, it's worth it!

### It Is What It Ain't

I'm tired of people telling me what to do  
I'm tired of people telling me stay in school  
I'm tired of people telling me stay off the streets  
I'm tired of people telling me Lil' Suave a straight beast  
and RIP to my nina C  
I'm tired of people telling me they get down  
I'm tired of people telling me they from the town  
I'm tired of people telling me they know about rounds  
I'm tired of people telling me they'll lay anybody down  
That's when I make a frown  
'cause they don't get down  
I'm tired of people telling me when I can go home  
I'm tired of people telling me I can't get my dough  
I'm tired of people telling me watch out for 5.0  
I'm tired of people telling me get it the right way  
I'm tired of people telling me stay out the way  
But I'm gonna get it my way, me and my homies  
I'm tired of people telling me stay away from the town  
I'm tired of people telling me to stop laying people down.  
I was born and raised in the town, and I'm a do it until I  
get put in the ground.  
It is what it ain't.  
I'm tired of people telling me.

-Lil' Suave

**From The Beat:** There's a contradiction in this poem, and maybe you can explain it to us. You say you're tired of being told what to do, tired of being told you can't go home, but then every single other thing you say you want to do is something that can get you locked back up... which means that if you follow that plan, you'll end up right back in the situation you were tired of. Can you clear this up for us?

### At Camp

What up, Beat? I don't got nothing special to write about today — just here at Camp, postin' with the homies. It's cool, but the weak part about it is when you got to get in roll call! So that's it, Beat readers, 'till next time.

-Vee

**From the Beat:** It sounds like you're doing a good program. Keep up the good work — and get out! But staying out of trouble at Camp doesn't mean you're learning how to stay out of trouble on the outs. Think about what else you'll need to do out there besides post with the homies, if you want to stay free!

### My Definition of Freedom

the definition of freedom to me  
is when i can read and write and learn  
without other people saying i can't do it  
but freedom is also when i can feel free  
where I sleep at and i don't carry a gun

-Big B

**From the Beat:** Regardless of where you are, a gun is never a good idea. Sure, if you fire a gun into the air, you might chase away a group that's trying to jump you or something like that, but you also invite someone else with a gun to panic and pull it out in "self-defense" to shoot you, maybe kill you. What you say about people discouraging you from learning is really interesting, because it means that our peer group, even our so-called friends, can deprive us of freedom, if we cave in to their harassment and quit exercising our freedom to "read and write and learn"! What young thugs and gangsters don't know is that there is more power in a book than in a gun, if you want to live a free and successful life in this world.

### Bad Day

Today was a bad day. I thought I would have gotten a release but it was all bad.

I was really mad that I couldn't get to spend Thanksgiving with my family. But it turns out that I was the only one of three of my co-partners that was detained.

For a second I was stuck, I was confused, and angry at the time. But I've realized that they all got a deal to snitch on me and now they're home with my families and I'm stuck in here. I was told to come back in December 11th but my defender told me that there is a possibility that I might go to the Y, and I ain't going out. But yeah today was a bad day.

I realized that those ninjas I used to kick it wit' and smoke wit' done gave me up.

-Woody

**From The Beat:** We're sorry to hear about your day. It sounds terrible. And you know what, they weren't your friends, they were your co-partners, it's different. A friend would never lead you into trouble, just the way you would never lead a TRUE friend into trouble. Learning how to be a true friend to someone, a person who will always steer them towards what's right, can take a lifetime to learn. But you learned the first part of it — if someone wants you to do something that could get locked up — that person doesn't know how to be your friend.

### I Want To Be Free

To me freedom is being free, doing what you want to do, not doing what people tell you to do. You don't even know 'cause this is not the way to go.

Freedom is the way to go.

Freedom is being able to be with my girl when I want to talk to her. When I want and go to her house when it's all good. You feel me?

Freedom is going out and looking for a job when you want to make good money.

Being free is eating when you want.

I just can't wait to really be free. You feel, me it's yo' boy Lil' Rome.

-Lil' Rome

**From The Beat:** Here you write about physical freedom, but what about mental freedom. What does mental freedom look like, and what does it mean to "Free Your Mind"?

### Freedom to Enjoy Life

What it do, Beat! Ain't nothin' much up here, same Camp stuff. But the definition of freedom to me, has a lot of meaning, 'cause you gotta enjoy your freedom and not just throw it away!

People can do stuff like rap, play basketball, dance, and other stuff — and not do nothing wit' it but keep coming to jail. Then one day the judge gon' give them twenty-five years for a third strike, and it's just like they threw away they' life and they' freedom when they had something coming to them!

To all the Beat readers, it's time for ya to change ya life around, 'cause you ain't living forever and I know you don't want to spend the rest of your life in prison. Let me tell you, this is the last time Lil' T is coming to the Hall, 'cause I'm working as soon as I get out — and I ain't going to be in the streets too much.

But keep ya head up and make yo' own decisions.

-Lil' T

**From The Beat:** The way you can write a "gangsta rap", we were worried that you'd lost your common sense to the fantastic dreams (aka lies) you find in the street (game). We are so relieved to hear that you have a job out there waiting for you! Man, you are truly a leg up on staying free, 'cause putting money in your pocket legally is a giant step toward staying free. But now if you keep one foot legit, and one foot still caught up in it — you're bound to slip sooner or later. So make some clear decisions about what you will and won't do in the street, and then stick to it — for example, you don't need to please some G in a stoil more than you need to stay free, even if it's solo bolo.

## Sweet Dreams

every night i dream  
of you  
every day i think  
of you  
wishin' and prayin'  
one day again  
it will be me  
and you  
i love you  
i cherish every day  
wanting to  
see you  
i need you  
i got to have you  
back  
because without you  
my life's off  
track  
-Benjamin

**From The Beat:** Your poem is as sweet as your dream, at least we're pretty sure that's how it will seem to the one you love — 'cause who wouldn't want to receive what you've written above? If she's human, she'll feel what you're sayin' you're doin'!

## The Turf

what's my place of birth  
nothin' less than the turf  
i don't exist on this place called earth  
i bang my turf  
'cause that's all i'm worth  
the system don't know how we feel  
they think we just want to rob and kill  
what they need to do is put they'self in  
our shoes  
we don't got no dreams or nothing to  
lose  
but one thing for sure  
life ain't fair  
but welcome to the turf  
enter if you dare  
-Lil' Eli

**From The Beat:** The system will never put itself in your shoes, but that's what The Beat is here to do. Hundreds of writers every week know exactly of what you speak. However, you badly need to see you're worth so much more than ghetto fantasies of nothing to lose. Is this a place you really choose to be? No, the turf is here on earth in reality, and you need to see there's no other way to stay free but face the fact — you may bang the turf but the turf won't watch your back. It's a scandalous game that trades chump change for pain. Life ain't fair but welcome back to earth, face reality if you dare or live under the system's curse, uh, judgment — whatever you call it, there's not much worse.

## Free to Do as I Please

my definition of freedom is  
not having to listen to the white man  
or not having control of my own self  
for no one else  
not having to pick no cotton  
or do for nobody  
so basically i mean  
freedom is listening to yourself  
and doing what you want  
-Joslyn

**From The Beat:** Yes, yes ... but — you have to educate your heart to know what's good for you. An ignorant heart will want fool's gold and will still be bought and sold, 'cause it doesn't know how to show love for itself and so falls prey to the greed and self-love of someone else. First educate your heart to want what's good for you, and then do what you want to do 'cause you're nobody's fool.

## Family

what does the word mean  
to me — or to you  
the word family means something  
that is not given respect by others  
but something that earns respect  
by its history  
if you disrespect my family  
you are going to pay the consequences  
-Lil' Poppa

**From The Beat:** What if going off on someone for saying something foolish about your family, means that you stay locked up longer than you need to? Or, if you're out there, means you come back to being locked up? Then your action disrespects your family more than words ever could, because you need to be out there contributing to your family's well-being — and your own, as a member of the family. Forget about what fools say or do, and just make sure that the fool is not you!



## The Life I've Lived

the life i've lived, you got to bang on ninjas  
be solid, but my ninja 'cell did all that shtick  
my patna got shot at the age of eighteen  
and the whole squad started going insane  
so now the squad stay in and out of jail  
i'm only twelve and ninjas be scary  
my own cousin had me wanting his head  
didn't know that he was messing around with my big sis'  
i cut from my group home 'cause this ninja done diss'd  
my moms — so i walked up on him with my boy from the block  
we got the fo'five and oh boy when he seen us he stopped  
my boy posted up asking that ninja if he want' problems with us  
soon as i pulled out the fo'five and said what's up brah-brah  
that ninja got hella scared but i was just playin' a role for the squad  
seeing if he was solid but that ninja was feelin' the fear of god  
-Lil' Damani

**From The Beat:** Okay, let's imagine another outcome. You pull out your gun and he pulls out his. You fire first and miss. He hits you between the eyes. You lose your life 'cause you think you're momma got dissed? You think you're helping her by doing something like this? This wasn't really about your momma. It was about you wanting to act out some of that gun-toting drama. You screwed up your program to play with a gun. Ask you momma if she thinks that's what you should have done. If you want to respect the memory of Cell, put down the gun and start living your life well. 'Cause the story you tell is the same kind of bull that got Cell killed. He deserved way better and so do you. Please, Damani, stop playing the fool. Get yourself back in school 'cause going to jail with the rest of the squad really ain't cool.

## Thanks

What's up, I hope you all had a good Thanksgiving.

I am thankful for my mother being with me through thick and thin, and I'm also thankful to my lawyer for helping me. I wish them and everyone well for the holidays.

-Lazy

**From The Beat:** And we're thankful for the good spirits you bring to the workshop each week.

## Thought I Knew You

i thought i knew this ninja but i didn't  
i thought he was my patna but he wasn't  
i thought he had my back but he didn't  
i thought he wasn't a sucka but he was  
i thought he loved to bust but he don't  
i thought he was 'bout money but he wasn't  
i thought he was gon' get down but he didn't  
i thought he was from the town but he wasn't  
i thought i could post wit' 'im but no  
i thought he was gon' be around but i was wrong  
now i know i just thought i knew this ninja  
-Lil' Cookie

**From The Beat:** Before you start pointing fingers at someone else, you need to take a look at yourself. A real friend isn't someone who loves to bust, but someone you can trust to give you good advice, like don't play guns if you respect your life and your freedom. A real friend isn't all about money, 'cause friendship comes first. If a real friend has your back, he won't lead you into danger — and if you're leading him, he not only won't go but he'll try to talk you out of going. Until you understand what a real friend would do and say, you can't be a friend to yourself or to anyone else.

## R I P: Jae and Dubbie

What it do, lil' and big cousin! Dis your cousin, Poppa. I want you to know that I love y'all and miss y'all. This world has been hella lonely without y'all!

When y'all left, I went crazy. I felt like I'd lost everything. Then I lost my momma three weeks later, and a ninja went AWOL — a ninja dropped off the map for a month.

And when y'all's cousin came back to the turf, a ninja had to regulate for both y'all ninjas though, because y'all was gone and folks lose respect. But don't trip, I love y'all — gone but never forgot.

-Lil' Poppa

**From The Beat:** The greatest respect you can show Jae and Dubbie is to keep the love alive in your heart. As for respect on the street, it's the street that took their lives, right? Forget about word on the street — they don't know what respect means anyway. Respect yourself and rise above, so you can live a long life in freedom and remember Jae and Dubbie with love. When there's no more room in your heart for hate, that's the deepest you can regulate in honor of Dubbie and Jae, RIP with love for all eternity.

## Love

living life long and prospering  
it is an unbrokeable bond between two people  
love to me is when you will do anything for a person  
you say you love them no matter what happens  
me, nobody loves me but family  
that's okay, forget all y'all  
the only thing i need is me, myself, and i  
i hope i can make it in this world  
-Lil' Poppa

**From The Beat:** It's like two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, no one can make it alone; while on the other, we each must take responsibility for ourselves, and there will be moments when we feel absolutely alone in the world. Remember that sometimes we're doing a lot better than we're feeling. And when you are feeling alone, show yourself some love — and don't worry about the next fool or what he or she does. When you don't feel like you can make it in this world, just fake it till you make it! And you will.

## Court

Well, I go to court Monday, and hopefully I get released to the hut. I'm tired of being here, and I'm ready to eat some Chinese food and find me a girl, 'cause a ninja dry as a desert.

-Lil' Cookie

**From The Beat:** We, too, hope you get released, if you're really ready to try to please your mom on the real. 'Cause if you go straight back to running with your crew and acting a foo' — you'll be back soon, and for longer, too. On the real, we don't want to see that happen to you.



## The Beat Within Interviews SP

SP: I want to be interviewed about my homies in prison.

TBW: Okay. Who of your friends are in prison?

SP: Zapo.

TBW: What happened?

SP: When I was in middle school, that's when I started banging. The first guy I met was Zapo. I was goin' to the Mission with him to kick it with him. He's white and Salvadoran. He was on parole because he got caught with a .38, shootin' somebody. Then he went to YA for, like, six years. He got locked up when he was seventeen. Then he went back to the block when he was on parole. He used to tell me how people get done (do things) in YA.

TBW: What did he say?

SP: Latino people on one side, Blacks on the other side, and whites on the other side. Sometimes they (the whites) are with the Latinos, too, for protection or for business. And then he told me one time there was a riot in YA. Everybody started fighting and two people got shanked and one got killed. He was telling me about when people were walking in the yard, people always tryna get you from behind, that's why you always got to walk with two people—so the other one will be watchin' your back. He told me he used to be with this one dude from Pasadena, 'cause he was his homie, too, and he told me in the six years he was in YA, he saw several people get killed, and then he got out and then he went back to the block.

This one day we was postin' in the Mission and some fools passed by. They was doin' a drive by and then he started shooting. Then he shot the car a couple times. The narcs were, like, a few blocks away, and then he was running with a gun and the narcs came from two blocks away and he got rapped. Now they sent him to Folsom State Prison and they gave him two strikes, and he been fightin' 'em for it. He be goin' to court.

But he got another case in prison. Somebody got shanked and they tryna put it on him. I think he going a beat the case, because he didn't do it.

TBW: So he's appealing his case?

SP: Yeah. So if he beat the case, he's gonna get out by next Christmas. Then we gonna have an opportunity to kick it one more time. And then, when he get out, I hope he finish his parole and stay out of trouble. But I know he gonna try to do something stupid, but I'm gonna try to stop him, because if he gets another strike, it's over for him.

TBW: What can you do to stop him?

SP: I'm gonna get some girls for him and go somewhere.

TBW: So you're worried about him, aren't you? But what will you do to solve the problem if he's trying to get revenge for something?

SP: I don't know, but I'm gonna try my best to talk him out of it. I want to take him to El Salvador, too, because he never been there. His dad is white, but his mom is Salvadoran. We might gonna go over there to see family.

TBW: Maybe getting him out of the country for a while will be a great idea for him. He could start all over. Would that be a good idea for you for a while, too? Maybe that will give you a new look at your life here in the USA.

SP: Yeah, maybe.

TBW: Well, you obviously have a good heart for your homie, SP. It's good of you to be so concerned about him. It sounds like he could take his life in a number of ways when he gets out of YA. He's lucky to have you watching out for him. Are you worried he might influence you to get in any mess?

SP: No.

TBW: Are you strong enough to resist if he gets involved in any trouble and you're there?

SP: Sure. You know I am.

TBW: Does he know you're down at the Ranch?

SP: No, but he knows I'm locked up.

TBW: Well, SP, thank you for your interview about your friend. You have a good heart for him. Can you just be sure you stay out of any mess, yourself, once you're out there? We know you love your block and your homies. But we worry about you.

SP: You don't have to worry about me.

-Sp LCRS

**From The Beat: We just don't want your story to evolve into a version of your friend's life in the future. We worry that you've never seriously considered getting off the block, out of the game, or out of your gang. What will be different for you, once you're free again? There's no way to win at the game you're playing. What can we do, what can anybody do, to convince you that the game is so dangerous that almost nobody makes it out alive and/or free?**

## Log Cabin Ranch, Where Dreams Come True

Welcome to Log Cabin Ranch, where dreams come true. You can get wrote up, you can go OB (out of bounds.) You can't talk shhh to Tracy Hanes (Uncle,) and you can listen to BJ tell you am/pm Shot Boy (meaning he's gonna take your points and dock you two times.) Dock means a loss of points. Or you can just do your program and go home.

Welcome to Log Cabin Ranch, where dreams come true. And if you come down here counselors are gonna mess over you, and that's real. I been down here ten, going on eleven months, and this shhh is can, so don't come down here.

-Anonymous LCRS

**From The Beat: How are you managing down at the Ranch? Are you doing your program or are you messing up somehow, or is something or someone messing with you? Since you think the Ranch is can (weak,) how would you improve it? We know the Ranch is jail, but is there anything you wish you could learn, programs that could teach you anything you think would be valuable and useful on the outs? Welding? Drawing? Sculpting? Ceramics? Nature studies? Business? Counselors down at the Ranch try really hard to encourage all of you to change your lives and get you to stay out of any mess, once you're free again. Are the counselors reaching you? If you were a counselor and a young man such as yourself came to you, what advice would you give him? What are your dreams? How can you make them come true?**

## I'm Tired

Check it out, man. I tired of waiting for the next person to tell me when to shhh, and I'm tired of somebody else telling me when to eat and go to sleep. Man, I can't even sleep with my girlfriend at night, and, man, I think about it every day that I'm locked up, cousin. Man, I'm bored of this Ranch already, but it a cool place to be if you got time over you' head, but I'm gone do this for my family and my wifey, because I know both of them are thinking about me and are waiting for me to come back home.

So now I think to myself and wonder why I did this to myself. What made me come back to jail more than five times? But now I think before I do anything, because this is the last time I'm coming back to jail. I'm focused on my life and getting it straight. I love life too much to stay institutionalized and locked up.

-Moe Beezy LCRS

**From The Beat: It sounds like you're truly fed up with whatever life you've been leading that keeps bringing you back inside. And you know that if you get caught up again, a judge may get fed up and keep you inside for some real time. It must be awful to be at the mercy of any judge, at the whimsy of the juvenile justice system. But the only way out is to get out of the game. Do you have family, friends who are making it in the outside world, beyond the streets? Are they doing anything to earn money that appeals to you? Can they help you get some legal work? What do you want your new, next life to be like?**

## Me And My Folks— An Interview

Moe Beezy: What it do, Stub?

Stub: What it do, Boy?

Moe Beezy: Shhh, me tryin' to knock this time out.

Stub: All boy, I'm here, doin' the same thang.

Moe Beezy: Man, I can't wait to get out this hellhole, Cous'.

Stub: Man, who you tell? I can't wait to get out, 'cause we can do us.

Moe Beezy: Man, tell me about it, bra. I'm goin' on vacation, me and my girlfriend, and you and yours, when we touch down.

Stub: What it do, Ant?

Ant: Shhh 'bout to touch down in a few months. Waiting 'til the day I get back home, ya dig?

Moe Beezy: Boy, you know them feds around, and I'm not messing with the hood when I get up out of here.

Stub: Me neither. I'm about to get further—me and my wife.

Ant: Man, when I get out, I gotta make a few rounds, then I'm out of the way.

Moe Beezy: Be safe out there. I'll be out in a few months after. You tell the homies I said, "What it do?"

Stub: Man, me and Moe Beezy get out the same day, so holla at ya boys. Y'all know where we be. Get money.

-Moe Beezy, Stub and Ant LCRS

**From The Beat: It sounds like each of you is seriously considering staying away from the streets when you get off the Ranch, but if you "make a few rounds" as soon as you're free, how are you going to get yourself out of the game after that? You may be kidding yourself. What do you mean about "the feds around?" We hope, when all of you get out, that you'll each encourage the others to stay out of any mess and stay free. The longer you all wait to change your lives around, the harder it may become.**

## My Parents Are Always There For Me

This year I'm thankful for having both my parents. My parents were always there for me since day one. They always showed me love and that's why I'm thankful for them.

-Chi-Frank LCRS

**From The Beat: How is your family managing without you? How is your being incarcerated affecting them? Why doesn't your knowing that you may be causing them pain, stop you from messing up, getting arrested and being sent to juvy?**





## Why Do People Hate?

Why do ninjas have to hate people? See someone with something that they don't have, and he from somewhere else. They want to take his life, but someone is going to get revenge and the somebody is going to be six feet under.

-Yung Money B1

**From The Beat:** Others, like you, have written to The Beat that when someone gets jealous because another person has more than he has, that that someone may try to kill him. This sounds insane. Why do you think that some people find no problem taking what someone else has worked to earn, but can't get out and earn their own money?

## My Trip To Vietnam

My parents sent me to Vietnam for five months. When I got there, I was in a village in Vietnam. I lived with my aunt in Vietnam. They sent me to school. At school we had to wear a uniform and I had to stay at school for six days a week, and the food was nasty. When you sleep, you sleep on wood. The day I went back to United States for thirty days and got locked up.

-Lil' T B1

**From The Beat:** So, one the one hand (Vietnam), you had to go to school, sleep on wood, wear a uniform and eat nasty food. And on the other hand (here), you allowed yourself to be taken from your family, put in a place where you go to school, sleep on a metal slab, wear a uniform, and eat nasty food. Plus, you have to shower with a bunch of boys! When we look at this picture, we see a great opportunity (Vietnam) squandered by a foolish child who didn't know the value of what he had! What are the positives you take away you're your visit to your aunt's village — new friends? better language skills? greater knowledge of the world and other cultures? One day, when you're older, we hope you have this opportunity again, because, with a little more maturity on your part, you might truly appreciate it.

## Freedom

The definition of freedom is the streets.

-Michael B2

**From The Beat:** We put this seven-word sentence into The Beat so we could respond by telling you that freedom is certainly not the streets. You were on the streets and now you're a prisoner... How is that freedom? Freedom comes from understanding what you can do without limiting someone else's freedom. In other words, before you are free, you must be responsible. (Next time, Michael, please choose only one topic to write about, not all three. Thank you.)

## Don't Care

Hello. My name is Demarcus, and I am 17 years old. I am sitting up here in YGC. I'm in here because I got caught with my big bra Weedie. The police came out of nowhere and pulled their guns on me. We were just smoking weed and drinking Remy, and I was on house arrest. I had to be in the house at 6:00 P.M., and it was 11:30 P.M. If you know me, then you know that I don't give a damn. So I'm just saying all you females stay out the way 'cause if you make the wrong move then you are going to be facing 18 months in a group home. I just saying be good and put your faith in God.

-Man-B B4

**From The Beat:** Well, if people who know you know that you don't give a damn, then they obviously know that you don't give a damn about being here, either. Basically, you invited them to bust you by violating all the conditions you had agreed to. That's fine — as long as you're willing to accept the consequences and own them. If you don't care about your own freedom, then you don't care that you're in here with a bunch of boys wearing someone else's draw's and answering to a bunch of strangers with power over your life. So, at what point will you start to give a damn?

## My Girl Said She'd Wait

When I got locked up, my girl said she would wait for me. But I called my homie and he saw her with another dude, so I got mad, very angry. But then I heard that I was getting out on Wednesday, so I stopped trippin'. so forget her. I'm keeping it moving, but she think I don't know, but I do. She got something comin'. I get out tomorrow.

-Simon B1

**From The Beat:** You say "forget her" but isn't that what you already did when you allowed yourself to be taken from her (and your loved ones) because of some selfish desire you had. By risking your freedom, it's you who cheated on her, because you basically told her there were other things more important in your life. If you do the things that send you to jail, then you can absolutely count on the fact that life will go on without you. Is that life's fault, or your own?

## RIP OG And Bay

I really don't know how I'm living because OG and Bay is gone. It's so different without them. What is there to do without my people? It hurt me too bad. I don't know what to really do. If I could have both of them back, my life would be better because right now it's real messed up, man. RIP OG and Bay.

-B. Wizz B1

**From The Beat:** We're very sorry about the loss of your homies, BW. Now it's up to you to live for them as well as for yourself. If you put your life at risk by playing the same game that took theirs, then you're not only risking your own life, but the memory of theirs, which you carry around like a treasure.

## I Didn't Run

Today I got out and went to my granddad's. I have been in here for 51 days. All I have been hearing was da boys are everywhere. I went out. It felt so different. I was thinking about running, but I thought about that half year I would get if I ran. So I stayed, and came back.

My PO said I am going to get out on the 27th of November. She told me, "I thought you were going to ran." So do your shhh, get out, go home.

-Frogy B1

**From The Beat:** Except for one line near the end of this piece which we took out to protect you, we really liked what we read. It is a sign of growing maturity that you wanted to run but considered the consequences and made a decision that hurts in the short-run but helps in the long-run. Be very, very careful about what you THINK you can get away with... unless you want a repeat performance here.

## Freedom

To me, freedom is not being locked up. To me, freedom is something great and everyone should love it. Freedom is like, you can like whatever you want to like. You can think whatever you want. There's no freedom when you're locked up.

-Ramon B1

**From The Beat:** If you think freedom is so great, why did you risk yours by doing whatever brought you here? Is it possible to be "free" in here or "enslaved" out there? Does freedom (on the outs) have any limits? Does your definition of freedom include the right to limit or end someone else's freedom? Is anyone 100% free?

## I Want Freedom

Freedom is what I want. Freedom is what I need. Freedom is being free from being in YGC. I don't like this shhh. I gotta be free.

-Moso B4

**From The Beat:** Well, if freedom is that important to you, why did you hand it away to strangers? And what do you plan to do when you regain your freedom to keep it?

## Don't Give A Damn!

One situation would be getting a girl pregnant and having nothing prepared. I would probably commit suicide and have the baby live without its real daddy. I don't give a damn about that (woman) and that baby.

-Derryl B1

**From The Beat:** When you have a baby, then you'll give a damn! Until then, we don't get much sense that you give a damn about anything, including yourself!

## Deal With It

If I was to not walk again, the way I'm going to pull through is just deal with it, even though I don't want it.

Once I heard I get a life sentence, I will stab myself, whether then getting locked up.

-Michael B2

**From The Beat:** Why can you deal with the first situation but not the second? Well, the way to deal with the second situation (life sentence) is to make sure it never happens!

## You Were Already Dead

I thought I knew you, but you wasn't there  
I thought I knew you, but you didn't care  
I thought I knew you, but I thought wrong  
'Cause when I knew you, you was dead

-Michael B2

**From The Beat:** We'd like to know more about the person who is the subject of this poem. Once this person died, what is it that you "knew" about him or her that you didn't know before?

## Glad I'm Here

Before I came to juvenile hall, I was one bad kid. I used to beat people up, break people's windows for fun. Then I got arrested for stealing toys at Toys R Us when I was eight years old.

They kept me at their station till my parents came and picked me up, and you know what my mom said to me when we got home? She told me that if I keep this up, I will go to juvenile hall. I thought this place was a joke but guess what... this place ain't no joke.

Now I've been in here for a whole month and I hate it. I wish I was back at home with my mom and dad. Now in a way I'm glad I'm here for all the stuff I've done.

-Alx B2

**From The Beat:** Well, we don't know about how glad you should be for allowing yourself to get locked up, but we do appreciate what you are saying about changing your act. You've learned maybe the most important lesson of all — this is your only life, and it's no game! Your parents have learned a few things in their time on earth. Maybe you should credit what they know by paying attention to what they say.

## Waiting

I can't wait to get out of this juvenile hall because the new building is opening. I'm about to go to a group home so I can get out of here before it opens up. After I'm done with the group, I'm going to my real home, ya feel me. I know everyone in a group home wants to go to their real home.

My dad's getting out in February so I got to try to do good so I can move back with him so I can do what I do. I'm just waiting to get out so I move on with my life so I can take care of my family and business. So I'ma get out and work for The Beat so I can help people out and get my dough. I'ma holla atcha Beat when I get out for real, for real.

-G-Boa B2

**From The Beat:** Well, we like the fact that you're looking forward to getting out and working at The Beat, but it's not a place to make much dough. That only comes with the slow and steady hard work of going to school, avoiding trouble, and preparing yourself for a career. That takes time and sacrifice, but the payoff is well worth it!

### Freedom Is Doing What You Want

My definition of freedom is being able to do whatever you want to do whenever you want to do it. Locked up in YGC is not freedom, it's torture. Unit B2 is worse than Unit B5 because there's something called d-roll and if your on d-roll you don't get seconds and you got to clean the toilets.

Freedom is being able to get stuff off your chest when you got it on your mind, and in here you can't.

-Robert B2

**From The Beat:** Here's the problem we're having with your definition of freedom, Robert. If freedom is doing whatever you want whenever you want, what if we want to lock you up? Aren't we free to do that? Where does our freedom stop and yours begin? What are the limits of freedom? We agree with you that being in YGC is far from freedom (even though you can get things off your mind by writing them in The Beat), but we don't think you've thought deeply enough about this subject. When you think of everyone's freedom, how do we respect yours and ours at the same time?

### To Be Free

My definition of freedom is you not being under anybody, doing what you want, being who you want to be. To be free is the shhh man. Don't do anything to mess up your freedom because it is very valuable to have, so don't mess it up

-King Michael B4

**From The Beat:** You give good advice, Michael, so why didn't you follow it yourself? What was it you found more important than your freedom that brought you here? If freedom is "doing what you want," what happens when "what you want" interferes with what somebody else wants? How can you use your freedom while also respecting the freedom of others? What are freedom's limits?

### Bouncin' Back

I thought I knew you but I don't. Now what do you want me to say? I'm sitting here thinkin' to myself like, "Damn! When they say that they are your friend, man, they lying, you fill me. I bounce back like Michael Jordan in a shootout. Don't stop me 'cause I'm close to the end. I got to go.

One love. Stay Down

-Flat Head B5

**From The Beat:** Well, Flat Head, we want you to bounce right back home and never bounce back here again!

### Life

If I was doing a life sentence in prison I would be like, "Dayam! I messed up! But it's OK dough because I will be in there with the big homies. But I wouldn't like it 'cause no more females. The adjustment that I would have to make will be getting used to the pinta.

Something I would say to someone in this situation will be, "Dayam! You screwed up big time, huh." You say something right now, but when you in that poison you probably won't feel like that.

-Chicano B4

**From The Beat:** Even the "big homies" cry when they are locked up for life! Don't you think people sentenced to life in prison already know they messed up big time without you reminding them of that? What are you doing to make sure this doesn't happen to you? If you think you can keep doing what got you here (and got those "big homies" there) without paying the same price, you're in for a rude and painful future shock!

### Freedom To Marry And To Smoke

My definition of freedom is being able to marry my baby momma like I want to before I'm eighteen because we want to be together for our baby son coming soon on February 8, 2007.

Another way I want to be free is I wanna be able to smoke weed that was grown on this earth in front of a cop and not get arrested for that stuff.

Well that's my definition of freedom. I'll talk to y'all next time all y'all ninjas and 'hood rats. When and if y'all get some freedom keep it 'cause it ain't cool.

-Young Hitta B4

**From The Beat:** Some people — especially those who have been together for many years — might not think of marriage as freedom, but another kind of control. Being able to marry is a sign of freedom, but it's like getting out of the hall. That's the easy part. It's what comes afterwards that's hard to maintain. As far as smoking weed legally is concerned, there are places where that can happen, but not at your age, and the reason for that is that your body and your brain are still developing, and introducing chemicals (whether weed or alcohol or any other drug) into that process can only interfere with that development. Does freedom have any limitations? What are they?

### On The Block

What's up Beat? This is ya boy Young C trying to make a change once I get out of juvie. Da block will always be my second home 'cause that is where I get my money. The block is where you get respect earning stripes and smoking purple grapes. That's what I always do on the block 'cause when I go see my PO I don't get pee tested.

On the block is where my team talk on the girls. I got much love for my team and they got love for me. On the block we post up on the corner doing nothin' all day, bored, waitin' until my team come and meet me on da block so we can have fun. That's where we have parties at and all the girls would come and holla at a pimp on the block. Some would come and pass through and say what's up or what it do with you bra.

See, I miss a lot of things on the block 'cause I had been locked up for a long time. When I get out I'm going straight to da block and throw a party with the team.

-Young C B2

**From The Beat:** As long as the block is your "second home," YGC (or some other jail) will always be your third home! We're afraid that you will have to experience more of this kind of slavery (the kind where you hand over your own freedom to a bunch of strangers) before you open your eyes and see that the only money you're making is going into the system's deep pockets while you find yourself surrounded by a bunch of males taking orders from a bunch of other males. Sounds like hell to us, and we would do whatever it takes to avoid it. But then, we're older than you and have "been there, done that." You say you're "trying to make a change," but there is not one word about the kind of change you want to make or how you plan to do it. Instead, your entire focus is on the block and actions that got you here to begin with. So, where's the change?

### I Thought I Knew You, But...

There some people who are pop tarts. Pop tarts is hard on the out and soft in the middle. Some people think they know each other, but you never know who snitched. I feel like if you in the game you in it. If you ain't ready for what can happen then don't get in the game.

Some people get in the game blind like Ray Charles. I was seasoned with game and already knew what can happen. Nine times out of ten, if you get locked up for life you gone at least think about snitching. At the same time ninjas know not to snitch.

-Lando B2

**From The Beat:** And we want to tell you that you are in no way "ready for what can happen" (unless you're ready to spend the rest of your life imprisoned behind four walls and razor ribbon), which means — by your own definition — you should get out before it's too late. You think you're in too deep, you're too much a gangster, etc. etc. None of that impresses us at all. What impresses us is the 16-year-old who has just been sentenced to 2 life sentences in state prison; what impresses us is the number of funerals held each week for children shot by other children; what impresses us is the emptiness of the future you've chosen. We hope as you gain maturity, some of this will impress you, too.

### Sick Of Being In Here

Man, what's up with the Beat? Man I'm sick of being in here man, 'cause I been in here for too long. I can't take this shhh no more because this shhh is not cool. People telling me what to do, when to use the bathroom, when to take a shower, and even when to eat. Man I want to get out so bad. "Sick of being in here!"

-D B2

**From The Beat:** Well of course you're sick of being here, DB. That's the whole point! Now, can you connect the dots between your own actions and your current address? If you can see the link — if you can identify your own responsibility for being here — you have a much better chance of never coming back!

### Living When The Life You Know Is Taken Away

If I had 16 years in jail and I was 16 years old, I would not have to live with myself. I probably be dead, but I would keep my head up and try to live. You now it's hard to do 16 years in jail.

-Whisper T B2

**From The Beat:** It's hard to do one week in jail; we can't imagine how hard it would be to do 16 years! We suggest you find a way to stay out of jails altogether — after you walk out of this one!

### Think About Me

My mind thinks about a lot of stuff, makes up a lot of things and comes up with a lot of ways to get through the struggle. It's like I see my future but can't get on the path.

I stay away from bad things but it's like it finds me.

And when I'm locked up in the room I think, "Who's thinking about me? Who cares how I'm doing besides my mom and family? I mean really, who's thinking about me? Does my PO really care? Is the judge on my side? Will I get out on the 21st? Will I?"

But all I'm asking is when yo' head down think about me. And in yo' prayers just think about me. Just think about me. Thank you!

-Macky-O B4

**From The Beat:** We feel the sadness in this piece, Macky, and we wish we could reassure you that the people who really should care about you do. But the reality is you have to care enough about yourself that you don't do the things that result in handing over that care to strangers, whether cops, DAs, PDs, or POs. You have to be on your own side first before you can hope to bring others to your side. Yes, we will think about you in our prayers, but part of our prayers will be that you think about yourself in a responsible and mature way — in a way that shows you care for yourself — so that you realize just how much power you have to affect the course of your life!



## Ain't Never Had Nothing

If I was put in that same situation (life in prison) I probably would kill a lot of people and I just would not have no remorse for nobody 'cause I ain't never had nothing, and that just would anger me more. It would make me want to become the most notorious killer in the hall or prison. I don't know how to explain what I am trying to say.

-St. Louis B4

**From The Beat:** We think you've explained your feelings quite well, even though we doubt that you would do what you say in that situation. Does it surprise you to learn that death row is the safest, calmest, least violent section of San Quentin? Why do you think people who are sentenced to death would be better behaved than people doing shorter sentences — exactly the opposite of what you say you would do in their situation? Maybe you could think about this question and see if you can come up with an explanation.

## Running Away From Home

I love my mom and dad, but sometimes I can get tired of the house. I ran away from home and showed up on my court date, which was six days later. I went to court and I was going to go home, but my dad was still disappointed. So he started yelling at my attorney and telling her he was going to sue them. We went back to court and I was sent to juvie for nine days.

-Egypt GU

**From The Beat:** Why did you have to go to court in the first place? Was it for running away from home? We're not clear from what you wrote why your father was threatening to sue them. Over what? What happened?

## Not Bein' Here Is Freedom

My definition of freedom is not bein' in prison for the rest of your life. Freedom is when you don't have to go to your room when someone tells you to. Freedom is when you can eat whatever you want, and when you want. Freedom is when you don't have to do what a person tells you to.

-Jameel B5

**From The Beat:** Is the freedom you describe here important enough to you so that you plan to make some changes when you get out of here that will mean you never have to come back? What are some of those changes?

## What I Think

Still can't believe I'm in a place like this  
Wishin' I was home  
Or kickin' it wid ma chick  
Trippin', thinkin', like what ma people's doin'  
Wishin' I could get out,  
But every night I still prayin',  
Ma cousin in B4  
Still sleepin' in the cold  
I'm wishin' that I neva walked ma ass out the door  
But fo' real, though  
I shoulda stayed ma ass home,  
An' helped ma family instead of stealing ninjas' dough  
Look how I'm livin',  
Can't get out for Thanksgiving.  
All I do is call ma mom  
An' ask her to forgive me,  
For this stupid shhh I did,  
An' don't do it again.  
An' thanking ma dad  
For always visitin' me.  
That's just how much love I got for ma family,  
An' this is what I think  
About everything.

-Randy B1

**From The Beat:** What do you mean this is the way you think about everything? Do you mean everything comes back to how much love you have for your family? It sounds like they deserve your love. It's clear that they have made a lot of sacrifices for you (it's a sacrifice for your dad to always visit and for your mom to be without the help she wanted to get from you), so now it's your turn. When you are tempted to do the things that bring you here (and you will be tempted), remember just how much you owe them, and make the right decisions.

## My Definition of Freedom

My definition of freedom is when you don't get told what to do, like when to take a shower, when to eat and when you could talk to your families or friends. Freedom is when you make your own decisions and get to go out wherever you want and do whatever you want.

-Young B B5

**From The Beat:** If freedom means doing whatever you want whenever you want, then do you support the "freedom" of the police to put you here, the freedom of the counselors to talk to you however they choose, the freedom of the PO to recommend conditions of release? If you don't support these people having the freedom to "do whatever" they want, then how can that be your definition of freedom? What happens when what you want to do affects what someone else wants to do? Does one person have the right to exercise that freedom at the expense of another?

## The Anger

I'm in class, just sittin' on my butt  
Waiting for the teacher to come help my ass  
So I can pass this stupid class  
I'm tryin' to make a poem but I'm mad  
So I'm just gon stop and stay mad!  
I'm goin' through a lot  
I wish I had some pot,  
So I could stop thinkin' about all the pain that I got  
I need to let it out before I go insane  
I'm tired of holdin' in all this freakin pain

-LaRonda GU

**From The Beat:** Unfortunately, we had to cut a number of lines from what you wrote here because they violated our rules about threatening people or using The Beat to hate. Don't do it! We know you are angry and going through a lot, and so you're craving a way to escape from your thoughts. But the problem with smoking pot to escape is that it's only the thoughts you escape, not the life you want not to think about. Once you come down, the only thing that's changed is the time — it's later than it was when you started... Sometimes it's better to face our problems squarely (even painfully) than to run away from them.

## Silent Tears

Sad and hurt  
Lonely and weak  
A place where I don't want to be  
I confess my problems to no one's ears  
As I try to hide my silent tears  
-LaRonda GU  
**From The Beat:** This is a tight little poem, LaRonda, but why do you try to hide your tears? How does it benefit you to keep everything to yourself? Isn't that one of the reasons you feel "lonely and weak?"

## I Wish I Was Out

What up Beat? It's young Brian. I wish I was out to go play football. If I was at home I would be training all day long. I wish I was home to take care of my grandma. I can't wait to go to the studio to make beats. The wish I need is really I need God to get me out. When I get out I am going to do right for my family. I wish I would get out before Thanksgiving.

-Young Brian B2

**From The Beat:** If God gets you out, what will you give back to God to show your appreciation? You say that you wish you were home to take care of your grandma, but you were home and you let yourself be taken away from your grandma, which leaves us with two questions: Who is taking care of your grandma now, and what will you change on the outs to make sure you can keep taking care of her

## Get Out And Stay Out!

My definition of freedom is to get out and stay out of YGC, doin' me outside of here, and havin' to do what I got to do to be a man. I just got from B4, and now I'm on that grown man shhh on B5. No more of that kid shhh. Rust gon keep in mind what I need to do to stay free, down an' out.

-Rust B5

**From The Beat:** We wish you would have included some of the specific things you "need to do" to stay free, down an' out. By the way, we don't think being in B5 will keep you from experiencing some kid shhh. Maturity comes to each of us at different times.

## Love

Love is a strong word, not just a word that rolls off your tongue  
Love is a word with pain and feeling  
Love is word that somebody who care about you —  
Not somebody who will step all around an' over your feet  
Because love is not a game  
It's a word of pain

-Shelly GU

**From The Beat:** If love is pain (and we know it is), can't it also be joy, happiness, pleasure and fun? Isn't love much more a roller coaster of emotions?

## Six Months Pregnant

Hey, this Guerra, aka Young Snow Biz. I been out for a quick minute and I was thinking about my daughter Ari. She 'bout to be three years old on my due date (I'm 6 months pregnant) but I been leaving her neglected for the longest time. I haven't talked to her in four months. First I would be a hypocrite not understanding the pain my baby daddy would go through until recently my new baby daddy left me in the time.

-Guerra GU

**From The Beat:** Another kid on the way? We want to say congratulations, but at the same time, we're wondering what it means to bring another life into this world while not able to take care of the life you already responsible for. We know it's hard being a parent, especially a teenage parent. We hope you will take your life and your responsibilities (for yourself, for your children) more seriously. Don't get caught up again.



## Thinking About My Life

When I got locked up, for the first three days, I didn't care. But when they keep making me stay here, I start to care and it makes me think about myself and what I been doing in my life. The thing I was thinking about my life is about my future. My thinking is to try to do my best in my life.

-Thomas B1

**From The Beat:** Trying to do your best is all that anyone can ask of you. If being up in here has you thinking about your life and your future, that's good. Have you come up with a plan? We hope so, because if you don't plan for your lie, you can be sure that someone else will plan for it, and you won't like their plan.



### Kudos To The General

I'm talkin' kudos to the general  
But they don't print my stuff  
I said, "Kudos to the general"  
Y'all gonna print my stuff  
You see what I hate the most  
Is people that can't keep it real  
With the general  
I ask 'em, "Why you keep lying to me?"  
Who ain't lying to me  
I'm like, "Why you lying?"  
I said, "Not me" to the general  
Nobody lies to the general  
Yo, so I'm just gonna go  
"Kudos To The General"  
I don't never lie to the general  
You gonna, Beat  
General, like, "Damn, where is the general?"  
I'm, like "I'm the general."  
You can't count on no miracle  
The shhh is critical

-D LCRS

**From The Beat: We didn't mean to disrespect you when we didn't print your "Kudos To The General," last week, D, but this piece is incoherent. What do you mean about you being a general? A general of what army? For what purpose do you have an army?**

### In My Shoes

Oh, we can trade shoes, but my shoes kind of tight,  
like I been through a cold fight  
and the rudeness and pain I can't recite  
So that is the end of my night

-Dubb B5

**From The Beat: In some ways, no one can really walk in any one else's shoes, though it's worth thinking about how other people have grown up and what obstacles they are facing in their lives. No one's life is a bed of roses.**

### Love

Love is a plan for two people or more.  
Love is not a plan for one person.  
So you all should show love to all people.

-Lil' Valley LCRS

**From The Beat: You're so wise and kind-hearted. When you show love to people, do they usually return it? Tell us more!**

### What's My Definition of Freedom?

Man, just to keep it real, my definition of freedom is when you can go where you want to go. By saying that I mean just to go to school. Society is more important to me than anything in the world, man... remorse.

-Lil' Atl B5

**From The Beat: This is the beginning of an interesting piece, but only a beginning. It sounds like you understand the relationship between freedom and responsibility, but we wish you had spelled it out in more detail.**

### Living When The life You Know Is Taken Away

First, when I got locked up, I thought it wouldn't change my life, but it did. Like the first time I got locked up, I went crazy because I missed my family so much, and me thinking about them got me so sad.

When I finally got released, I got probation. Then I got caught again and got locked up. They locked me up even longer, because I was on probation. That was really hard for me, because my mom was in another country. That's why I was sad. I was sad because I miss my mom and sister and my aunt.

I thought I was getting out on my next court date, but I didn't, and that got me crazy and sad, and now it's getting close to Thanksgiving, and I really hope I get out.

-Joseph B1

**From The Beat: You began by saying that being locked up changed your life, but you didn't explain how. Was it being so sad from missing your family that caused you to do whatever it was that brought you back? If so, it doesn't sound like a very effective strategy to miss your family so much that you do something to get locked up away from your family... When you're free again, what do you need to help you the most to stay out of this place and places like it? Can we help?**

### Getting Played

I am at Log Cabin Ranch an' I am getting played. I just caught two weeks for doing something, an accident. But you know me-I am going home anyway. If they let me or not. I am going home. Man, people up here be telling, I am not going to name no names. But they told because they lost the weight room and that's something. But I am going home two weeks late.

-Lil' Valley LCR

**From The Beat: Everybody makes mistakes, and we know you're proud of your record down at the Ranch. It must hurt to have to do two more weeks of dead time, but we hope you don't blow it by running. Sometimes your maturity becomes so wonderful to watch. Can you please just suck up those two weeks, learn what you can during them-enjoy the deer, the raccoons, the wild turkeys, your friends, and go home a free man? We hope so.**

### People

People always think they know people, but what they know is a cool person. But if they really know how people act, they would not said a thing. So you people that think you know somebody, keep thinking. The cool people will have you sleeping. So be cool to cool people.

-Lil' Valley LCRS

**From The Beat: Do you mean that some people who act all cool on the outside are just good at hiding what they're really feeling on the inside? You may be right, at least some of the time. Do you think that people who pride themselves in hiding their feelings are somehow not to be trusted?**

### What Makes Me Feel Free!

When I'm out at the town, kickin' it with the homies, passin' around a chop after poppin' some heebies, then crack open that MGD and start swerving wit' my pack of ports, wit' no cops in sight the whole night, is what makes me feel free.

-Chi Frank LCR

**From The Beat: We now know you like to party, to feel free, but what does this piece teach anyone? What can you do that's fun, that doesn't include smoking weed and popping pills? If the police find your homies and you indulging, they'll arrest you and you'll be back in the halls, at the Ranch, or worse. How can you feel free and stay physically free?**

I regret what I did and I wish I can take it back because while I was in here I missed my 18 birthday and I missed my son being born.

### The Beat

Feel the beat of your heart  
Feel the beat of a newborn baby  
Feel The Beat Within

-Lil' Valley LCR

**From The Beat: Sometimes, like now, you have your hand on the pulse of the earth. What do you feel when you feel the beats of your own heart, of a baby, of The Beat Within?**

### Life

All you people that know life, you should be cool, 'cause life will bite you in the ass.

-Lil' Valley LCRS

**From The Beat: You're talking about karma coming back on someone when s/he messes up, aren't you? Do you think if someone does something generous or kind, that that comes back on that person, too? How did you learn this lesson?**

### Regrets

What up Beat? This Young Jokes. This topic I'm writing on is "living when the life you know is taken away."

Right now I'm fighting a 707 case, which means if they're gonna charge me as an adult or minor. If I get charged as an adult, I go to 850 Bryant and go to trial to see if I'm going to prison. If I stay here, my choices are CYA or, hopefully, the Ranch. Hopefully I stay here and go to the Ranch.

I regret what I did and I wish I can take it back because while I was in here I missed my 18 birthday and I missed my son being born. I been here for 150 days and still going. Hopefully I get out soon. Stay up Beat.

-Young Jokes B4

**From The Beat: You've given up a lot of what is important in life by allowing yourself to get locked up, perhaps for a long time. And you've cheated your son who will be without a father for some time. These are things, painful as they are, that you are thinking about and must think about to make those changes you plan. (We say "you plan" to make changes, because unless you do, all those "regrets" you talked about won't mean a thing.)**

### I Thought I Knew You, But...

I thought I knew you, but now I don't know.  
I thought I knew you, but I guess I didn't.  
You used to be my friend but now you ain't  
I used to like you, but now I hate you.  
I thought I knew you, but I guess I really don't.

-D-Boom B2

**From The Beat: We wish we knew why you had to change your opinion so radically about this person. Was this a girlfriend who hurt you, a homie who betrayed you, a family member who abused you? What?**

### Listen And Take Heed

Why is life so messed up? Why do people have to use drugs to feel good only for so long? You ain't doin' stuff but messing up yo' life more. It's just like when you smoke weed. You gon smoke weed for so long it ain't gon get you high no more. That's when other drugs come in like crack and other drugs that can mess your life up.

You know why kids always in and out of jail? 'Cause thugs think they know everything. Listen to what people are saying! Take heed to what they are saying. Live yo' life right 'cause I know I'm going to live mine the right way an' stay out of drugs.

-Man Man B4

**From The Beat: Thinking that you know it all is part of being young and foolish. In the process of growing up, we learn through trial and error. We make mistakes and learn from them so we don't repeat them. That's what maturity brings, a memory of good and bad decisions that let you avoid doing things that you've already experienced negative consequences for doing in the past. It seems to us that is what is happening to you — you've learned that older people may have something worth listening to, and that drugs screw up your thinking so that you do things you wouldn't ordinarily do which put your health, your life and your freedom at risk. Staying away from drugs is the most responsible and adult decision you could make.**

## The Beat Within Interviews Lewy Lew

TBW: What would you like to talk about today? This is your interview, so you can choose any subject you want to.  
 LL: About people who think they know me, but they don't.  
 TBW: What is your impression of what people think about you?  
 LL: Some people just stereotype me. They think I'm destructive, a menace to society.  
 TBW: But you're not?  
 LL: No.  
 TBW: Good. So what are you really like?  
 LL: I'm a chill type of person. Easy to talk to, easy to get along with.  
 TBW: Do you get along with your family?  
 LL: All my family is cool. My mom sort of spoils me sometime. I got a good relationship with my granny. I'm a granny's boy.  
 TBW: Do you have brothers and sisters?  
 LL: I got a little brother who's fifteen.  
 TBW: Does he follow after you?  
 LL: Yeah, but he bigger than me.  
 TBW: What's your brother like?  
 LL: He's bad.  
 TBW: What kind of bad?  
 LL: He be don' stuff he's not supposed to. He doesn't listen.  
 TBW: Listen to you?  
 LL: Yeah.  
 TBW: Why not?  
 LL: I don't know.  
 TBW: What do you tell him?  
 LL: Stay out of trouble.  
 TBW: Does he see you get in trouble?  
 LL: I don't know. Probably.  
 TBW: Does he worry about you?  
 LL: Probably.  
 TBW: Do you worry about him worrying about you?  
 LL: Yeah.  
 TBW: Do you worry about your granny worrying about you?  
 LL: Yeah.  
 TBW: Does she visit you?  
 LL: No. She can't. They won't let her.  
 TBW: Because (the authorities in juvy) won't let anyone visit you beside your parents?  
 LL: Yeah.  
 TBW: What about your mom?  
 LL: Yeah, she come.  
 TBW: What about your dad?  
 LL: My dad could come, but he doesn't come.  
 TBW: Where is your dad?  
 LL: He in Richmond.  
 TBW: Does he know you're in trouble?  
 LL: Yeah.  
 TBW: But he won't come?  
 LL: No.  
 TBW: Do you want him to visit you?  
 LL: I don't care.  
 TBW: If you asked him to come visit you, would he?  
 LL: Yeah.  
 TBW: So you're not tight with your dad?  
 LL: I go to his house and stuff. If I'm at his house, he spoil me.  
 TBW: How does he spoil you?  
 LL: He come and get me in Vallejo. Make sure I got all the video games, get me pizza, give me money. Give me weed.  
 TBW: So both of your parents spoil you?  
 LL: Yeah.  
 TBW: How else do people have the wrong idea about you?  
 LL: I might seem cool, but if it's time to get down, I get down.

-Lewy Lew

**From The Beat: Thank you for sharing a part of your life with us. It was a pleasure to be here for you. Count on us when it comes to writing and sharing your thoughts.**

## I'm Supposed To Be Gone

W'at's up wit' The Beat? This is yo' gurl, Lil' Foot, from MCJH (Marin County Juvenile Hall.) Well, I was supposed to get out a week ago, but the judge played me hella bad. But I might get out mañana (tomorrow) at drug court. Well, ma gurl's got stay in here for Thanksgiving. Well, I don't got nothing to say. Peace out 'til later.

-Lil' Foot

**From The Beat: We hope this program help you become a better person like it has helped others with the same problem you got. This is a chance life is giving you to become someone in this life. It's your choice whether you want to take advantage of it or not. What's going to be?**

## Freedom

Freedom is not being in here, gettin' off probation, and being able to go and do what I want, which is what I will be gettin' on 1/1/07, when I turn eighteen.

-Mic

**From The Beat: Soon you'll be an adult and be pretty much on your own. Do you hope to go to college? Have a career? Travel? Have a family someday? When you write that soon you'll be able to do whatever you want, what do you think that will be?**

## Freedom

Freedom is when you're not behind walls

When you get to sleep on your comfortable bed  
 But, no, you sleep on concrete block  
 Where it's cold instead

-No Name

**From The Beat: Oh no, but you and many of you like to come back! Why is that? Do you like this place? Why not? And why you're here?**

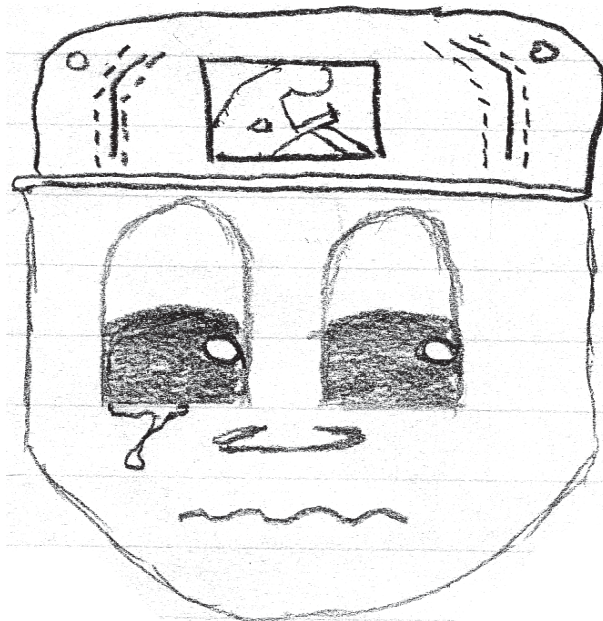
## I Wanna Get Some Emotions Out

What it do? This is my first time actually writing for this thing. I usually just sit there when we do this, but I wanna get some emotions out. They about to keep me here for a month. I'm missing Thanksgiving and my little sister's birthday. She's turning eight.

The longest time I've been in here is two and a half weeks, and even then, I was basically goin' crazy, so I don't know how I'm gonna survive more than a few weeks. I started reading The Beat in my room and that's why I decided to write... Ummmm, I don't know what else to say, except I'm pissed! The system tryna play me. Fools!

-Anti-Square

**From The Beat: It's great that you trust The Beat enough to write whatever you're feeling. Keep your patience active and you will go through all this time. It seems like you hate being in here, but you also are coming back to this place? What's the problem?**



## RIP YG

Since you died, life has been dramatical. The family ain't been right since we lost you to the Holy Ghost. Man, the way you died. They did us dirty. Man, they got the whole streets shedding tears for you.

Man, I tell you this, though. It ain't been easy, but I'm a soldier, so I'm ride it out to the fullest. I'm always keep my head up just for you. So, see you when I get there. I love you!

-Cookie

**From The Beat: Sorry for your loss! It doesn't sound like his death has encouraged you to stop whatever in the streets, if you still consider yourself a soldier, ridin' it out. Could one lesson of his death be that nothing is worth one more person dying, including yourself? If so, could you get out of the streets to save your own life? Just keep in mind that revenge doesn't bring anything good, but more tragedies, suffering and tears. Wake up!**

## I Thought I Knew You, But...

I thought I knew you, but you snitch on me  
 I thought we were friends, hermanos (brothers)  
 Now I realize that I don't have a really friend  
 And that I never had one, you feel me?  
 I always thought good things about you  
 We always used to talk about our secrets, our aventuras  
 Remember when you got in a fight?  
 I was there with you, in your side  
 I always used to get back  
 But that is my biggest experience in my whole life  
 That really hurt me so much  
 And I got so much pain  
 But I forgive you, because I am a real friend  
 Nunca confies en nadie ni siquiera en tu major amigo  
 (Never confide in anybody, not even your best friend)  
 Peace out!

-Jonny

**From The Beat: Was there a reason why this person did this to you? Maybe next time you should know your friends better before giving all your trust. What did you learn from this experience? How can we know who to trust and who not to trust? Remember that not all people are the same kind of people.**

### When I Look Into Your Eyes...

I see a thousand life time you went looking for me.  
Now that I see your eyes for the first time it feels that I'm next in line.  
I always used to stare at you from behind  
Or from a far  
And now I'm sitting next to you  
And I have people wondering how you came to be my star.  
While the haters still admire us from a far  
And they'll never let us out of their eyes  
But the way I stay sane and experience on pain  
Is by looking into your eyes  
And knowing things well never be the same.

-Emmanuel

**From The Beat:** Your swagger is very poetic and fits right in our pages. It seems like you see a lot when you look into this person's eyes, so is what you see actually there? Or are you fantasizing about what you would like to see?

What do I see when I look into your eyes. A  
warming smile, a gentle hand, a beautiful person  
who loves all.

### Latino And What

When I look into your eyes I see hate,  
I see you judging me by my race,  
I see people calling us beaners,  
And they say we would never be leaders  
That ain't coo,  
You don't know what a Hispanic been through,  
My family did a lot to get to this country,  
Because people said it's easy to make money,  
They left family and friends behind,  
And losing them make people hurt inside,  
People say because of that I'll never make it,  
But that's some other BS,  
So this is what I say, writing here this paper today,  
I am Latino and proud,  
And nothing you say will shut me down.

-Luis

**From The Beat:** What a great poem! It's a shame that racism still exists in this country and it's a whole new millennium. We think it's about time more people who are brave like you stepped up and let the world know about their race. People fear the unknown, so now they have nothing to fear because you let it be known. What are some things about your culture that you think people over here don't understand? Have you ever been to 'Latin' America? We hope you'll get a chance to go if you haven't and if you have, can you tell us about your experience?

### Do I Believe In Love At First Sight?

I don't know but other people think that if you look at a person you can tell if that's the one. I think that if people think they see things in each other they can fall in love, but it takes more than sight to know a person because I can remember times when people make eye contact, talk to each other and find out that they have things in common. For me, to believe in love "Love at First Sight," is a mixed thought.

-Dominic

**From The Beat:** We understand and totally can feel where you're coming from. It's an amazing thing to be able to believe in that, but reality for some people may be the opposite. There's no right or wrong answer so we appreciate your honesty. Have you ever fallen in love at first sight? Do you think you ever will? Who are you in love with now? You don't have to answer that last question.

### When I Look Into Your Eyes

What do I see when I look into your eyes. A scared little boy or girl. A person afraid to come out of hiding 'cause they feel they will be judged. No, I see a brave adult who won't stand down for what he/she believes. I see a warrior who will fight a long awaited battle. Not a coward who feels fear and hates all who oppose him. But a brave lion waiting for his enemies to approach him for he is king of the jungle. What do I see when I look into your eyes. A warming smile, a gentle hand, a beautiful person who loves all. Not someone who hates life and all who inhabit it. What do you see when you look into my eyes.

-Angel

**From The Beat:** That's a beautiful piece to a person who obviously is just as beautiful. Not often do we witness people who are that courageous so when we do, we must give them recognition as you have. And what better way to do that then to write them something from the heart. Does this person inspire you? How has this person effected your life?

**From The Beat:** We introduced this incredible workshop a couple of weeks ago, but we felt the need to introduce it again because they've hit us with some stellar writing this time around. Canon Barcus is a community house around the corner from our office and it has kids there who are eager to learn. We've been without their writing these past couple of weeks because unfortunately this editor had to go to New Orleans and East Palo Alto for two consecutive Wednesdays. We don't want the kids to feel like we're everybody else — you know, those of us who say we're going to be there and don't show up because really that's not who we are. Hopefully, this editor's most recent lack of displayed responsibility won't discourage you all from writing because we really enjoy this latest addition to The Beat... So with all due respect and admiration we bring to you, the Canon Barcus Community House...

### Love

Love what is it.

Is it a word described by how you feel and how another feels about you.  
No it is an emotion that comes from the heart.

It is an emotion that lasts for a lifetime that really says how you feel.

I see love as an opportunity to express

How I feel towards the one I love.

True love is something you can't find on the radio

Or doing drugs or drinking.

True love is something that happens to you

When you find something or someone you enjoy spending time with

To me I found true love in a boy I enjoyed spending time with

But when you have love at first sight

You know you have found someone special.

Someone to take walks on the moonlight beaches with.

Someone to share all your dreams with

Someone who is going to be there for you no matter what.

Some say love at first sight is a myth or doesn't exist.

But I say love at first sight is something you can't waste or look for,

It comes to you.

To believe in love is to follow one's heart.

Love is like the wind sweeping through your hair on the beach.

Sharing a nice ice cream sundae in a diner.

Walking in the snow.

Walking, no dancing on the clouds with the one you love.

Things like love can't be judged.

You can like someone of a different race, ethnic background, color.

It doesn't matter 'cause love isn't based on

Who you wanna fall in love with

It is based on who you really care for

And who really cares for you in the same way.

Time will stand still for you both

And forget all the fortune cookie shhh.

They say you can't find true love or even love at all.

I say if you really want it you will find the right one for you.

Love isn't a game you play on ones' heart it is like an art.

Painted by a painter whose canvas is crystal white

And whose paintbrush is dipped in the finest paint.

He uses the strokes to create how he feels.

He feels nothing but love.

So like an artist you just can't draw something

And expect people to love it.

You must love what you do even if others don't.

So feel the love 'cause love is a precious gift.

-Angel

**From The Beat:** You really broke down the word love for us in your own words and we really appreciate it. From your piece we can tell you're way more wise than your age would suggest. You must've been through a whole lot. Well, since it seems like you've had some experience with this emotion — love, we're going to ask you a few questions about it. Is that okay? Do you believe that it's better to have love and lost than to have never loved at all? In your experience, do you think most people think they're in love when really they're not? If so, why do you think people are blinded by the thought of love? If not, why do you think so many people are so deep in love? We really would like to pick your brain about this some more, but we'll just have to do that in our workshop because we don't want to take too much of the page asking you questions. Thank you for being so intelligent about this...

### Love At First Sight

I do not believe in love in first. I don't believe in it because love is something that you develop over time with a person. So you would ask yourself why do I love her when I don't even know her name, how she is, what's her background, and mainly does she love someone else. Now you go up to her thinking she's so beautiful and wondering what she's gonna say, and before you know it you're talking to her and she is the rudest most cold hearted person you have ever met in your life. Then as you walk away you think to yourself like wow. I never knew a person can be so beautiful and pretty but yet so ugly and rotten on the inside. Now this is why I don't believe in love at first sight...

-Kiko

**From The Beat:** You bring up a really good point. Sometimes the most beautiful people on the outside can have the ugliest personalities or vice versa. Could you see yourself with someone that you weren't attracted to on the outside, but loved how they were on the inside? Basically, could you be with someone you thought was ugly if the way they treated you was gorgeous?



**OBA** FRELIMO We really appreciate this next writer because not only does he give concrete reasons why we should educate ourselves on certain topics, he also gives us suggestions on how to go about doing so. This week his topic is law, and rightfully so, being he's witnessed and experienced some unjust facets of our great justice system. He says that when lifers go up for parole now, it's always to be 'shot down' because as he so observantly puts it, "We, the locked-down lifers are the state's bread and butter! Why would they want to free their mill tickets! We equate money to them! Money revolves around politics, politics is all about money!" So the only other option if we're going to equip ourselves with the tools necessary not to get 'rail-roaded', we first need to educate ourselves. Education is the key to unlocking the doors of opportunity. He's writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA. And we really appreciate his wisdom and insight. It's well needed in this new era of 'going dumb'.

## "If You About The Business Know The Business."

What it do? What's crackin', with all y'all at The Beat, locked in CDC/ juvenile, and on them streets!? I send mines as always, to the real souljahs and souljettes fighting for the real struggle and cause, to be free and live equally, unlabeled (have or have not) 'cause we all got! Dig! Check this out, my purpose of this missive, is to put y'all up on game that many ain't knowing or been mis-informed about, concerning the ways these laws is twisted up and prison's not granting no paroles for lifers. Though many inmates who've done over the time, they were told they'd do, as myself, are eligible for parole, the board of prison terms ain't paroling none of us!

On May 13, 2004, the Board of Prison Terms inmate appeal process, was eliminated! So in order to attack a BPT's denial, you have to file a state writ! Which will take you having a legal hand in knowing the law and what applies to your case and how your rights have been violated! Thus forth in order to win that writ, you gotta know your shhh! Point blank period! Which is why I'm at y'all with this piece, "if you about the business, know the business!" Many in the game, committing crimes don't know nothing about the laws that govern those crimes, and what the courts are gonna do once you get up in there to fight your case! Instead many of us put our trust in paid lawyers or public defenders and sit in the passenger seat, and follow their lead! We take their word as golden, without question, because of our own ignorance to the law, which is a grave error, and not gangsta at all! Based on us not knowing, they can tell us anything or overlook avenues of defense or laws, other cases, that could free us from charges, or death sentences!

So I propose that for the many of you reading this script, that are gonna keep doing dirt, or locked up in Y.G.C., C.D.C., or on the block, that you invest your money in some legal books and dictionary, instead of the XXL, Vibe, King, Smooth, Don Diva, Black Men, or Curve magazines, that you like to see and read to pass the time! 'Cause yah wasting yo' time with all that, if you ain't tryna attack your case and get free! While you're looking at lil' Map, in the magazine all thick and pretty that you'll never be able to touch. You could be in them law books, filing papers to get you home, to lil' Map, you got, that's tryna hold you down, yet fighting with her emotions to leave you, cause yo' bid is too long for her to hold on! Smell me! This ain't a game, they tryna put everybody on lock for life in prison! Prison is so overcrowded, that the state has passed out interstate transfer forms for inmates to sign if they want to go to another prison outside of California! Forget that, we want freedom! We got folks that's been in Cali prisons fighting their sentences in the courts for years and some just getting started!

They bus California prisoners out to different states, many will never see freedom again! Due to the laws in other states, along with other problems that will be faced! This C.D.C. shhh is a slave plantation system, and since Cali done 3-struck us all to death and got overcrowded, like cattle, they wanna ship us to another owner to be responsible for us, after they done already messed us over and broken up our families! So it's a must we all get legal minded and challenge the system as we've been challenged, with the laws! Using intelligence is a must! Knowing the business is a must! I fell at sixteen years old, a hyphy block boy, without a lick, of legal knowledge! Once them laws got me, it was a wrap, I not only got railroaded in court, due to the politics surrounding my case, but my own ignorance of the law!

I was hoodwinked to take a plea bargain for fifteen to life, and told I'd do seven years in a prison boot camp and be released on a lifetime parole period! I never went to a boot camp, I done brought the state fourteen years and I went to board for parole, to be home, back in the city on 4/12/06! Yet I'm still on a stanky ass prison plantation! Yet I ain't the only one who's been crossed in court, it's a long list of brothas who fell before my time with 2 to life, 5 to life, 7 to life, on up, that's still in prison and not being paroled! The courts say one thing and the prison does what they wanna do!

For those who ain't knowing, don't fall for no tricks in court, as many of us did! If faced with a deal, and the D.A. wants to give

you a plea bargain outta gong to trial, don't take no time with a life sentence tacked onto it! That eligible for parole "crap", they be spittin' is BS! They'll lie and tell you, "yeah on a 15 to life, you'll have to do the whole 15 years, then you'll be eligible for parole and you'll get out on life- time parole! etc. etc. etc.! Yet it's all a lie, yeah you'll be eligible, yet that don't mean you got an actual release date; and without a date, you will be denied parole! So don't let them courts or your counsels cross you up to signing your life over to the state, and putting the power in the prison board's to decide if you fit the bill to be freed! Because they ain't gonna do it! We, the locked-down lifers are the states bread and butter! Why would they want to free their mill tickets! We equate money to them! Money revolves around politics, politics is all about money! So we all are political prisoners! Just not in the sense of pushing our own political agendas, being the reason for our incarceration! But the system's political agendas! Their agendas to get us while we're babies, so we won't grow up to be a part of the struggle, that was going on before we were born, against this oppressive system! They know, once we're in jail, our vote don't count, our voice don't count, 'cause it's way too many.

We can't be heard individually! So as long as we get struck out, there won't be no new Malcolm X's, George Jackson's, Nat Turners, Black Panther parties, etc., got them to deal with on equal grounds! We're in jail, we're considered outcasts in the public's eyes, some can't ever get their own families support in prison, cause they done gave up on them! So what's left!? You in a cell, alone, with no source of income, hungry and hurting, craving things you may never, ever, get to see or do again, unless you learn about the law, and get back in the game and fight for you own freedom! So I admonish, all you young cats, including some of you adults, to get educated and pack a legal sword so sharp, that you cut out the BS, the crooked legal system done did and continue to do to us, and get free!

Fight tooth and nail for your freedom, don't just sit there and let them tell you it's over for you, and give up! It ain't never over, 'till you laying in that casket! All you young slick and super saucy wit' it, souljah's and souljette's in juvenile, who ain't scared to be about the business, regardless the consequences, start learning how to write state/federal writs, in legal language, the constitution, penal codes, how the legal courts work, what documents are available for filing and how to file those documents, case laws, statutes, etc! Start reading cases on the same crimes, your enticed or manipulated by emotions to engage in, so that you'll know the outcome of how things went, for those who lost and won their court cases! That way you'll be prepared for the storm when it comes and not be unprepared!

Its one thing, to be out there doing yo' thug thizzle and goin' dumb, having it yo' way, and its another to just be dumb and not know how to outsmart the man when he comes for you, by using his laws against him! Don't let the police get away with their crimes way, it cause they made it that way! Pick up them books and know the business! Especially if you intend on being bout the business! Ain't no half stepping, yah life is on the line, on whether you free or die in jail! So, never give up, never give up, never give up, freedom will come, if fought hard enough for it! Y'all stay strong, out there! Keep it real out there.

### Legal Books For Preparation and Freedom Fighting

Black law dictionary  
Penal code book  
Deering's CA. Codes annotated  
California rules of court (state and federal)  
California code of regulations (C.C.R.)  
Code of federal regulations  
Daily appellate reports  
California criminal law practice and procedure  
California evidence bench book  
Appellate practice manual  
Appeals and writs in criminal cases  
Within: summary of California procedure  
Within: evidence  
Within: California procedure  
Within: California cranial law  
The California state prisoners hand book  
Uniform system of citation  
California style manual  
Shepard's citations  
All legal books on searches and seizures, McKinneys pig est, West Digest, California Reports etc!  
Constitutions of the United States: National and state  
Brief writing and oral arguments eighth ed.  
Legal English: second edition  
Intro to the legal system of the U.S. 3rd ed.  
Treaty interpretation, the constitution and the rule of law  
Power and rights in U.S. constitutional law

In the cloudless sky, under a pale moon, your hair becomes  
 Cascading waves of reflected light  
 As the encompassing angels breath,  
 becomes our midnight breeze  
 Of his willful deliverance and guidance,  
 of two wayward souls:  
 Back to one.

## Every Heart

Tell me how, how can we make one fresh start?  
 Every heart, every heart knows how to survive...  
 Standing here, I try so hard not to cry  
 Every heart, every heart knows how to get by...

In my loneliness, it was the sadness that made me walk  
 alone...  
 In my heart I keep everything so deep that no one will  
 ever know...

In between the oceans, in between the stars I will for you  
 pray my dear  
 All the love that has been within me I know how to keep  
 it alive...  
 Through the good times and the bad we can work it out  
 Because a heart that knows it's very own beat  
 Knows very well how to cry out loud...

Now you tell me, tell me if you can handle this deep pain  
 my dear?  
 Every heart, every heart knows about his own dreams...  
 Every tear...I will be the one who will wipe from you dear...  
 Where ever your heart may be, every heart knows about  
 that special  
 Place that forever can fly and dream...

Deep within my soul I know my happiness one day I will  
 see...  
 It's the faith and love that shows me how to move on and  
 how to be free...

In between the valleys, in between the deserts, I will  
 forever wait for you here...  
 All the love runs so deep within me it's for only you my  
 dear  
 Through the bad times and the good, we can make ends  
 meet somehow  
 Every heart that knows how it's dream forever keep  
 Will it be known of a love that was meant to be...

Everyday that passes by I feel the torture cries...  
 I have no idea how we can alone abide...  
 Through the end of time, there is a chance that in our  
 tunnel will be light  
 In our heart the time will forever be alive. Alive!

In between the stars above us, I will be here holding you  
 tight...  
 Whether it's good times or it may be bad I will stand by  
 your side!  
 Within the mystery that is life, love will never die  
 All the love that runs deep within me will show  
 That it knows how to survive  
 In between my dreams, and within me will show  
 That I know how to survive  
 In between my dreams and within my soul  
 You'll never be alone  
 Because every heart has it's own known beat  
 And it lasts forever more...

**ALEX SHELTON** It's been a while since we've heard from this outstanding poet and amazing artist. Probably one of the oldest and most wise people we have writing for The Beat, Alex Shelton has a way with words like no other. And whether he's speaking about the monster that is incarceration or his love for his wife, he finds a way to massage our minds with strokes from his pen. This week he writes two poems expressing his love and with a heart as enormous as his, you should brace yourselves for he has a whole lot of love to express. Writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA, we hope he doesn't take too long to write us back again because we always impatiently wait for his words to make our publication a little bit better. We also want to give a shot out to Gustavo Campos for typing his stuff for us... Thank you for recognizing, as we do, the importance of Alex's thoughts... We'll be impatiently waiting for more...

## Time (A Husband's Love)

As I explore the galaxies in your eyes  
 And rest upon the crescent of your smile  
 Your aurora consumes the energy my vitality  
 While the brightness star above, reminds  
 We are a creation: One

Together, but regions apart: the dominating factor  
 Of destiny on hold  
 For I am bound: slave to God, to become a better man.  
 The outcome: as God wills  
 The dominate male of his one creation, being  
 strengthened  
 To uplift his female half.

In the cloudless sky, under a pale moon, your hair  
 becomes  
 Cascading waves of reflected light  
 As the encompassing angels breath, becomes our  
 midnight breeze  
 Of his willful deliverance and guidance, of two wayward  
 souls:  
 Back to one.

For it is written: male; female; created: one  
 As all my trials and errors, punishments, mistakes;  
 Mis-stepped paths, misplaced faith: nothing less than  
 directions  
 Towards the guidance and mercy: required willingness  
 To honor, The One.

In thefts, and deaths of lives: all actions, reflecting:  
 Unthankfulness for our breath  
 Although, through his forgiveness, he continued to guide  
 our paths,  
 As his angels held the unseen at bay: even the  
 documented errors, that lead to the flame  
 Which is....  
 The cause for this pain.

Under a firdous (paradise) moon, I patiently wait:  
 As God's angels record these thoughts of you.  
 Even in Arizona deserts, a phoenix rises above the  
 flames;  
 The pit shall not consume us, for we're not, victims,  
 Of a systems "game"  
 I'm just: learning a sense of direction as I pass along  
 these lines  
 Willful slave to God, how as I fulfill the sands...of time.

"Dedicated to all the youth, at the Walden House Facility;  
 Maricopa County, Arizona (my birthplace) as I continue my  
 fulfillment of time. Remember: it's never too late. Thank  
 you for your love, in all your writings."

In between the oceans,  
 in between the stars I will for you pray my dear  
 All the love that has been within me I know how to  
 keep it alive...



**BIG BEEZY** It's been a while since we heard from our old friend Mel-da-Star (formerly), now calling himself Big Beezy. This young man never failed to deliver a powerful message (even some we didn't agree with) when he was in the max unit at YGC. He's been gone for a minute, so we excuse him for violating some of our Beat rules (naming names, boasting of your spot) and removed the offending lines... There is a lot to pick from in the following selections, some filling us with admiration (getting his GED and working on his issues, preparing for college) and some filling us with concern for Big Beezy's future! (Missing the block as much as he does could be a prescription for returning to a lock-up far more serious than any he's experienced so far. We hope he re-reads his own final piece called "Why." Except for a sexist attitude, every excellent word of it should be applied equally to males and females. Beezy says that females should not do what males do because they don't know what they're doing, but if two years in maximum security followed by a long stretch at Glen Mills is an example of "knowing what you're doing," then we don't think he's the best person to give advice, ya dig?) One of our "favorite Beat writers" (as he describes himself below) will be finished with his Glen Mills alternative placement and back experiencing freedom soon. We invite him to come to The Beat office and sit and talk with some of our staff who have been seasoned by years and years of CYA imprisonment and who might have some useful advice. For the sake of his beautiful daughter — if not for himself — we hope he thinks long and hard about the choices he will be called on to make.

## I Cried When The Homies Died

I just read the issue of The Beat Within where it spoke the topic of crying. Me personally, I used to tell everybody that I cried my last tears to make it seem like I wasn't a baby, etc. But actually, men do cry, and the majority of the time it's in the dark. I mean I cried when my lil' bras Waga (RIP), Marcus (RIP) and when my lil' homie Rell (RIP) got killed.

You can say that I cried like a baby because I felt that they didn't deserve to get killed. Like I have their Rest In Peace pictures on the wall in my room, and when I look at the pictures, I allow the tears to freely flow from my face.

So, for whoever said that crying is for suckas, girls, whoever, then I honestly think that they lyin' through their teeth. If I wanted to, I could cry right now and not care who see me or what they think about me, and that's because I'm a grown-ass man and I can deal wit' myself. I wouldn't think twice about what people think about me. Real men do cry... in the dark!

## Good Side Vs. Bad Side

I got two twins, one is so sweet that you may think it's an angel, and the other one people swear it's a devil. No matter how hard I try to do good, the evil one always wins. What can I do? Who can I talk to? Is it you? I can only talk to myself 'cause I don't trust nobody else. Maybe that's what it is, a lack of trust I have for people that could be the bad side. I think people might try to hurt me if they knew my weaknesses.

I control my own destiny. The good side of me begs me to follow what is right, but the bad side of me is screamin' for me to do wrong. What it is? I worry what people might think.

See, Grandma told me. She said, "Boy, if you gon' be a Indian, be the chief!" Since then I have led. I got the strength, power and respect. I guess I have to run a new leaf and lead positive and let the roadside feel defeat. I'm a beast in a concrete jungle, a Silver Back Gorilla. Look everybody, that's my bad side talking. Just calm down and let's take it day by day, tick by tick. Got to watch out for the other people on the losin' team that's waitin'. Keep my eye on everybody and play it close to me. This is a chess game and right now I'm about to move my queen so I can checkmate because he never saw me coming, and now it's too late, game over and let's see who has first place.

Good Vs. Evil in this concrete jungle. Let's get it. And now the good side is about to shine. It's now or never Good Vs. Bad, who will win? That's the question I got!

## Feelin' Trapped

I feel like I'm trapped  
I'm in a trap and I can't get out  
My mind is begging me to run  
But my body will not move  
I feel as though I'm trapped  
A big 600-pound lion trapped in a concrete jungle  
I need to get out

## This Block

On my block, ninjas do what they got to do to survive in the streets. One of my big homies stated that all he wanted was a million in the ghetto. Got to respect. I miss hood. I been gone away from it for too long. I remember when I was just into my teen years, probably younger, I put my block name on my arm. That's how much I love my block.

I love everything about my block from the way it smells, to when the police come everybody yell out, "Yo!" Mel Da Star was my last Beat name because of my hood where everybody shine, so in a way we are stars! My lil' brother locked up in the same unit I was in, max. My cousin in the Ranch holdin' his head up hopefully, and another lil' cousin down in another unit.

On that topic of hyphy: in my hood we go dumb all the time, all day every day. We keep it lit scrapin' from the top, the bottom, and go in front and shake our dreads while smokin' big purple chops, fat chains on our necks, and gold fronts, standing on top of somebody Regal while they're driving and going stupid (dancing). That's hyphy. It's a movement in the Bay. Everybody in my 'jects know what that movement is. If you ain't wit' it, I don't got no talk fo' you, and that's on my momma!

## A Question

Why? The question is real simple. Mainly it is addressed to the females. I read these Beat Within's every month and it's always a female talkin' that talk (like she's gutta). See, I got a major problem wit' that because the girls are supposed to be worrying about school, paintin' they toe nails, etc. But instead, these young ladies act as if they have something to prove, and really they don't. All they have to do is focus on themselves, instead of everybody else, ya dig?

Like in the recent Beat I read, this girl was just like, "I can't wait until I get out so I can go to the block," and so forth and so on. What I got for y'all (these young women), this movement ain't made for y'all. I'ma say it again, this movement is definitely not made for y'all because y'all don't know what you're doing.

Girls and young women have dreams and ambitions at accomplishing things. Ninjas do too, but a female is more likely to do her. I got a letter from a friend and she said she always wanted to be a model or counselor, but she too got caught up in them streets. If you ask me that's a bunch of BS! Women, I'ma put it like this: go to school and get you a boyfriend that's gonna really be there for you. Not somebody that could care less about you, or you got to go to funeral every six months 'cause ya new boyfriend got whacked, feel me? Leave this movement and that hard shhh fo' the big dawgs 'cause in the game ninjas is really playin' fo' keeps.

Okay, I can feel you (all of you) when y'all state y'all can't wait to get out. Shhh I can't wait myself to get out so I can hit the block, ya heard me? My homies hold me down during my time.

But back to you girls, that street life is a man's game, so do something constructive wit' yo' self so that the wrong ninja won't turn you into a statistic and you wind up on the Channel 2 news, and that's on citas! If you got the answer to why do girls want to rock hard answer it in The Beat pages, but until then, keep it lit. I ain't sayin' y'all can't be in it, but what I want to know is why you want to be in it...



### Time Passes By Quick

Hey, what it do Beat? I ain't got at y'all in a while, but it's been all on me being focused on other things like my GED, Q-Act, and working on myself, ya heard me? Currently I'm in college prep and I'm doing my thing.

But look, I spoke to my daughter on the 23rd and she stated she was mad at me because I haven't called in two weeks (I had got into trouble not thinking). But remember, there was a time when I could barely understand the words that was comin' out of her mouth, but now I can understand her perfectly! I'm 18 years old and she's four years old. That's really crazy because I was a baby myself wit' a child, ya dig?

Time is goin' by fast. I kinda like it that the time is goin' faster because I just only been here nine months but it feels like I came yesterday. I like that the time is passin' by quickly. It feels good, because now I only have a few more months left to deal wit' it, ya heard me? But ey, Beat, get at one of y'all favorite Beat writers.

### My Introduction

I don't need an introduction, but what's good wit' all my thugs and thugettes? This that boy Mel, getting at all y'all from the Mills. To my lil bras, keep y'all heads to the sky.

I got a few more left out here (no, not years). I can handle my own. I stand on my own two feet, ya dig? This "placement" is all right I guess, but whatever, it's time fo' us to get out. We all really got to touch down.

What I got fo' y'all, just handle the business that you have to, because I sat up there in Unit B5 (maximum security) for two years and some change, fighting my case. Paid lawyers so I got to beat the charges! I'm not promotin' violence or my neighborhood, I'm just proud of where I come from, and I definitely wouldn't change for the world, and that's on my momma!

### Love Story

I love our love story, the ups and downs, the twist and turns,  
How I loved your eyes and that smile that made my loins burn.

I cherish the love that kept us together through it all,  
I just wish that at this moment,  
My heart wouldn't be doing this free fall.  
Take a look back at the day that we met,  
And my look of happiness,  
That's a day I'll never regret

Please remember the sweet moments we've had,  
They shall forever stay with me,  
But as for you and I, games over,  
Why did you have to do me dirty?

I thought as time passed we would grow stronger  
And no matter what stick together,  
But I'm just a "puppet" a fool in love,  
I should of known better.

And when I think of tomorrow,  
I wonder what our love story would have been?

You're my wife, I would of gave you my all,  
The only thing you'd had to do was be my friend.  
So in this time of need, you did a whoodini,  
You vanished like a ghost.

Yes, games over between us, but I have one last question?  
Where were you when I needed you most?

**MAC** Writing from Spring Valley, CA, in an institution we haven't got the name to, we bring you this next romantic. He breaks us off with two poems that are obviously to the one he loves on the outs. And as we read we can see his passion permeating through the page. She must be a lucky person to have a man with a heart like his. It's unfortunate that he's where he is because he probably would like nothing more than to feel the warmth of her touch. Then he closes with our personal favorite about what prison life is like. He describes certain 'characters' that come in and out of prison and it really paints a vivid picture for us. Thank you for sharing such a big part of yourself. We look forward to your next installment...

### No Longer Human Beings

Welcome all you inmates to your brand new home,  
Here you're lucky if you get a blanket, or a half a comb.

Surrounded by cement, and steel black bars,  
I can't remember the last time, I seen a shinning star.

Were locked down 23 hrs of the mother effin' day,  
To them it's normal, to us it's cruel and unusual  
Punishment, wouldn't you say?

Never will you be surrounded by so many men,  
And still feel completely alone,  
I hear grown men cry at night, wishing they were home,

This place I'm writing about is state prison,  
But you know what's a trip, we made the messed up decision.

We decided to commit the crime and come up in here,  
I've seen men with big ass brochas fall in love with queens.

Then you got the vatos who are all politicin,  
When two weeks before that they came in all sick,  
straight kicking.

Then you got the vatos who swear they're hard,  
Talking about all they've done and how they ran a yard.

But a lot of people don't know what really happens in hear,

This place is ran on violence, and straight fear.  
One minute your kicking it, the next minute yard's down,

Laying up with dust in your mouth as you hear the alarm sound.

Everybody down, cause there is no warning shot,  
Damn it, this is prison where even the guard's get got!

You see prison is a place where the devil pulls our strings,

In here were only numbers, no longer human beings...

### Still A Human Being

Sitting here all alone,  
Day dreaming of being in your arms, dreaming of being home.  
How I wish I could just go, yes just walk out of this place,  
And tenderly kiss the tears upon your beautiful face.

I feel so helpless, like a lost child  
Living in this place of darkness, where everything is wild.  
You see in here we are puppets and Satan pulls our strings,  
We are no longer human beings.

But as I sit here alone, I also shed a tear,  
Don't get me wrong, it's not because of fear.  
You see what you think is crazy, it's nothing to me,  
I live in a place of violence and insanity.

But what keeps me sane is the love that I feel,  
Because deep in my heart I know you're for real.  
Your what keeps me going, every single day,  
For me to be free, your love is the only way.

With out you in my corner, I would go totally insane,  
I couldn't live with that kind of pain.

So even though I reside in the devil's playground,  
He doesn't pull my strings,

It's because of you baby that I'm still a human being...

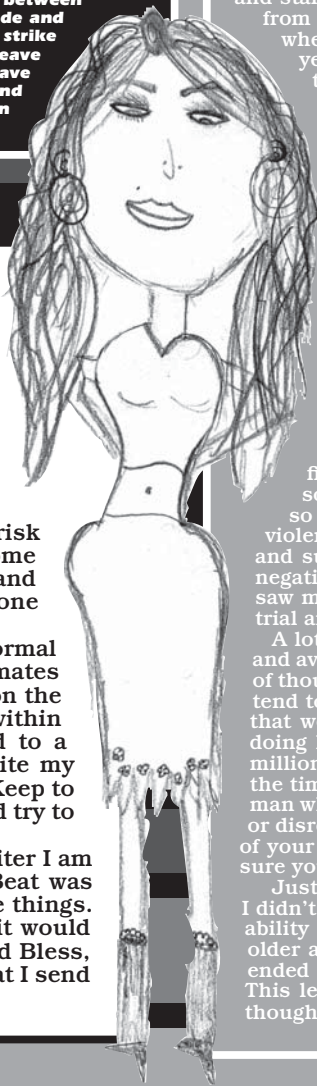
**NICK FLOYD** This next writer was exactly what we thought a young person should be in our workshops. For regardless of what was on his mind (whether people felt the same way or not) he would express himself in our workshops. He made them his own while sitting in unit three of Alameda County Juvenile Hall. Now he's writing to the very same kids that are where he was not too long ago. And in his writing you can see the growth that's taking place within him. Now he's more focused on going home and doing the right thing than most people we hear from on a day to day basis. And not only is he growing but he's reaching back to those who have yet to grow in the way he has. It's such a relief to hear some of the things he says. Things like, "It took me a long time to make a choice between the mainline and P.C. but I finally put my pride to the side and decided to go to P.C. because I can't risk getting a third strike and I want to make it home to my family, plus I want to leave all the gang and street stuff in my past and I couldn't have done that on the mainline." We appreciate his courage and look forward to hearing more from this incredible person writing from New Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

## What's Up Beat

I know it has been a very long time. I apologize for not keeping in touch with you. I am currently in CSATF/ state prison, aka New Corcoran State Prison. I spent about 5 months in San Quentin and I have been here for about 5 months and currently have about 6 years left on my sentence. It took me a long time to make a choice between the mainline and P.C. but I finally put my pride to the side and decided to go to P.C. because I can't risk getting a third strike and I want to make it home to my family, plus I want to leave all the gang and street stuff in my past and I couldn't have done that on the mainline.

A lot of stuff still happens in P.C. Your normal fist fights, correctional officers treating inmates like their nothing, and even some stabbings on the level four yard. I am on a level three yard and within the next couple of years will be transferred to a level two yard. I have been doing good despite my circumstances. I try to show others respect. Keep to myself, work out, call my mom, go outside and try to keep a solid state of mind.

Thank you for helping me become the writer I am today. When I had things on my mind The Beat was always there and allowed me to express those things. Feel free to write me when you can because it would be nice to hear from you. Take care Dave, God Bless, and please let everybody at The Beat know that I send my love and gratitude.



## To Unit Three Of The 150 Crew:

My name is Nick Floyd, a CDC inmate that resides in New Corcoran State Prison in California. I am sure that most of you, if not all of you are wondering why I am writing this letter. Well, the main purpose of my letter is trying to encourage you all to do well and give you some wise words of wisdom, so you do not end up in a situation like mine, or worse.

I have been incarcerated for the last three and a half years and started my term right where you guys are at today. I went from juvenile hall, to county jail, and then to state prison where I still have to serve the next six years off of a ten years eight month sentence. At one point I was facing twenty-three years to life, but thanks to God, ended up beating a life sentence and am fortunate I received the time I did instead of life.

I know that a lot of you hate it at the hall, and hate the program, but please believe me when I say it gets much worse. I use to complain about the food, staff, program, and juvenile hall period, but in all actuality the hall can help rehabilitate you if you let it, or you can continue to break the law and end up in the belly of the beast where I am today, or somewhere worse. I was raised in the heart of East Oakland, so I can relate to many of your situations, but the streets, drugs, guns, and disrespecting women only lead to one thing and that is failure.

I am still a young man (20 years old), but the system caused me to grow up fast and the day the judge told me I was guilty and sentenced me to 10 years 8 months. The odds are against young people, because we get sidetracked so easily and want all the finer things in life and don't want to work for them, so we decide to get them in the wrong ways. There is so much more to life than drugs, cars, sex, guns, and violence. Do we ever take the time to think about all the pain and suffering we put our loved ones through when we lead negative lifestyles? I didn't think so because I didn't until I saw my mother in tears everyday of my five and a half week trial and every other court day I had.

A lot of you still have the choice to turn your lives around and avoid enduring the agony and pain that me and hundreds of thousands of CDC inmates endure today. As young men we tend to think that we know it all and make ourselves believe that we can get away with anything. You may get away with doing little things, or at least things you believe are little, a million times, but eventually it all catches up to you and by the time it does it may just be too late. It doesn't make you a man when you do time, sell drugs, carry guns, commit crimes, or disrespect women. It makes you a man when you take care of your responsibilities, earn money the right way, and make sure you are there for your family.

Just ask yourselves one question. Do you like incarceration? I didn't think so, so why subject yourself to it if you have the ability to stay out. Incarceration only gets worse as you get older and from experience I can tell you it is nothing nice. I ended up getting tried as an adult at the age of 17 years old. This letter comes from my heart and is just a little food for thought. Please turn your lives around before it is too late!

**JAVIER RIVERA** Boy, do we have a treat for you all this week. This next writer, who's writing from the SHU in Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, hits us with a poem that really makes us want to give our hearts to him. With a voice that sort of reflects desperation, he speaks to God as if to say, "I know I've been bad in the past, but please let me in." And with the energy he puts out there we can tell he wrote this directly from the heart. It's a shame that incarceration can make one feel that way since we would love to see some rehabilitation going on. But anyhow the treat is a great piece from an even greater person. Thank you for your words...

## OK Now Beat Readers

I send my respects. I'm droppin' this poem called "My Statement On Encasement," giving you my point of view on things. Laws are steady changing, prison terms are getting longer, and hustling ain't what it's portrayed. For you youngsters in the halls here's a reality check. Prison is just around the corner. Wake up, get educated and become. Personally I wish I would have. But then some people have to live through the struggles. Stay positive. Better times will come. God bless!

## My Statement On Encasement

Being in a cage  
Trying not to let loose the rage  
Considered a monster at a young age  
Violence and drugs rule the pen  
Why am I sitting in the middle of all this sin?  
Why won't God let me in?  
Ain't got life but gotta pack a knife  
Paranoid some enemy won't let me make it  
Home to my future wife  
So I stride to be the one indeed  
Ruff, tuff, making enemy's say enough and plead  
Watching them bleed  
Not trippin' 'cause I'm from that strong breed  
Product of my environment of course  
But I do this with remorse  
Being in a cage  
Trying not to let loose the rage  
Considered a monster at a young age  
Please lead me away from sin  
God help me win  
Let this sinner in.



## What If Man Created God

Since the dawn of human self-awareness, we humans have been pondering one question above all others, and that question is: "What created the Heavens, the Earth, and all that moves upon it?" And since that question was first conjured up from the dark wells of early man's brain, many tales, spirits, and Gods have been birthed to explain away the countless mysteries which make up the universe.

Yet, what if there is no divine creator, no "intelligent design" behind the universe? What if earth just happened to be in that ideal spot in our solar system to sustain life — not too close to the sun and not too far away from it. And maybe it is like most modern scientists believe it to be, that true "life" sparked from a soup of primordial single-cell organisms, and only after millions of years that life evolved and branched out into what we now see today. Could it be that we human beings have nothing better going for us than that we are the most intelligent of these evolving creatures? That we are fortunate — or unfortunate — enough to observe the rising sun, and then wonder to ourselves, why is it so.

But what if we were truly honest with ourselves, truly prevented religious doctrine from influencing our thought process? What logical theories might visit us in the dark of night? Couldn't we then easily envision a prehistoric man emerging from his crude dwelling early in the morning so as to relieve his bladder, only to be startled by a bolt of lightning striking a nearby tree? What fear and wonderment would have swirled within his dark brain upon seeing that tree explode into a spectacular show of fire and light? After all, such a man wouldn't have the slightest idea about the natural electricity within clouds, nor how they might react to one another, or the very ground at his feet. Wouldn't this early man then find it easy to automatically make the leap to the concept of spirits, ghosts, gods, God!

Imagine this prehistoric man's reaction to the earth shaking beneath his feet during an earthquake. Would he not soon conclude there must be a Rock God, and for some reason he has grown angry? How mysterious must something so simple as falling rain have been to that man? And how long would it have taken for him to start beating a drum in the belief he could make it rain? Sacrificing a goat's blood? Burning offerings? And when that wasn't enough for the Rain God, a virgin girl, a small child? How long would it be before one village began to believe that their Fire God was more powerful than their neighboring village's Water God? And when would they reach the conclusion that they must go into battle to show non-believers the light?

However, what if mankind needed to create God for a much darker mystery, a mystery so dark it has invoked fear in the hearts of humans since the beginning of human life? And that dark mystery is the mystery of death itself. For even with all the breakthroughs in ancient and modern science, with all the light which has been shed on our dark world, still there is no answer as to what happens

**ISRAEL PEREZ** We always feel blessed when we get a piece of writing from our old friend Israel Perez — even though those blessings come much too infrequently these days! Here, the writer ponders what it would mean if we knew there were no God Creator and we had no belief in a better afterlife. Would people then do more in this life to make it decent for themselves and their loved ones? Of course, we don't know the answer to this profound question — but we love profound questions (even more than profound answers, which we don't trust). Israel stimulates our thinking from his cell in Salinas Valley State Prison.

after death. What happens to that sparkle in the eye when it is replaced by a milky cloud of sightless staring, when a smiling and laughing mouth stretches into a soundless screaming Oh.

Could it be that humans are so in fear of that dark abyss that they need to convince themselves that they'll live happily ever after — in Heaven? So heartbroken at the thought of a loved one dying, they must pretend they'll be united in the afterlife? After all, nobody wishes to believe that all that awaits a father, a mother, a beloved child is a feast for crawling things, the decay of their flesh, the sweet stench that every creature automatically knows to be death.

I choose to raise such questions not because I seek to be blasphemous towards anyone's religion, nor do I wish to invoke visions of decaying loved ones. No, I do so simply because of the lives I see many inmates living in prison; the many days they spend wasting away behind these restrictive prison walls; days spent under the impression that there is still — as if there ever was any — glory to be had in the prison lifestyle; where many of these lost prisoners awake in their cells each morning with the sole hope that other prisoners will hear of their names, learn of their deeds.

Yet, what if there is only one life to be had, one go around on this planet? And after it is over, there is only the blackness that only the eyes of the dead see. How then would one choose to live out the wisp of smoke that is a single lifetime? What if at the end of your days, all you had was the many years spent languishing in heartless prisons? All your accomplishments were of goals the vast outside world couldn't care less about, goals that most people in society would laugh at with disdain, accomplishments that most of your family members and friends would be ashamed of. Would you then wish for the opportunity to do it all over again? Would you then wish you had spent your one shot at life doing the things that truly made you and others happy and proud — spent your days with loved ones instead of wasting away valuable time with those who deep down mean nothing to you, all so you can impress those who care even less about you?

Well, it's not too late to wake from the self-inflicted state of comatose, to pick up that pen and tell your tale, to take up that paint brush and create your masterpiece, to get the first high school diploma in your family. Do something special to make a positive mark on your journey through this strange mysterious thing that is life. No, it is not too late, especially if it was man who created God.

**CHRIS GRAJEDA** A couple weeks ago our young superstar published a piece in The Beat Within's defense that was so touching it brought tears to some of our eyes. We've known Chris for a while now and we can't emphasize enough how important he is to our pages. For though we've seen him stumble and fall to many temptations, we've never seen a mind with as much potential as his. Growing brings pain and sometimes we must experience something before we realize we never wanted to experience it in the first place. This week he hits us with a poem that, true to Chris form, brings reality right into our faces. A reality that most people are so scared of they choose not to even think about it. Well, writing from the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA, he makes us think about it and that's why we've got nothin' but love and respect for him and his ability to relay his experiences to us.



## Prison

Prison, full of long days and lonely nights.  
Grown men acting foolish trying to commence a fight  
Some people call this home but to me it's never that  
Home ain't where 24-7 I got to watch my back

Prison, it ain't what it is all cracked up to be  
Unless you like to throw away your life for following  
orders

From a so called OG  
The game is twisted and it has always been  
The system is ruthless trying to slap you with three, five,  
and ten

Prison, full of wasted talent and missed opportunities  
If you don't believe me come here your self and see  
If you think you got homeboys in here let me tell you  
straight up your wrong  
See you go home

Take it from first hand experience 'cause prison is where  
I'm at  
It's full of two-faced homies that is disguised in tats  
You think your gang is down, well let me tell you it's fake  
So to the little homies, you better wise up be for it's to late  
Prison ain't all that youngstas it's just wasted ass time,  
Stay out and free.  
Much love...



**BALA** Sort of using the 'scared straight' approach this next writer who we've learned to love hits us with hella stuff this week. Still glorifying how bad of a gangster he is, we think he does so as a way to say, "Okay, you think you're bad where you are now. Come to state prison and see how bad you are here." We appreciate his approach, but would rather see less glorification of violence and things of that nature. Sure, we love when people explain the harsh realities of jail, but you can do that without gloating or boasting, and we feel like he did a little bit of that in his pieces. However, that doesn't take away from the message he bestows on us. And that's be careful at what you take for granted because in an instant it can all be taken away from you. Now, he's on the verge of losing the one he loves because she says, "I want a better life." How harsh is that for a gangster who needs love too." We all need love, especially when we're facing something as horrific as many years isolated from the rest of the world. But we can't receive love if we don't make ourselves able to receive it. And since most of us enjoy receiving love so much that we'll resort to self-destructive ways of getting that love. He's writing from the Pelican Bay State Prison SHU in Crescent City, CA, and we appreciate all he's written us. For though there are some things that concern us about his lessons, we can't deny the fact that he's a natural born teacher. And we're thankful to be students in his life's journey...

## Your Own Mind

If you don't own your mind, who does? Sounds like a simple enough question, right? Each of us own our minds, right? Not necessarily. Many individuals do in fact operate as if their minds belong to someone else. Whether out of desire for social approval, fear of being different, or just plain mental laziness. Many individuals let other people decide what their opinions are, how to act, what values to hold. All by default. They uncritically accept the values taught by their teachers, strangers, or peers. Rarely questioning, or asking whether their ideas make sense. They don't in fact own their own minds. Their minds are owned by others.

Owning your mind means making sense of the world based on your own observations and experiences. Rather than just depending on the word of others. It means trusting your own ability to make judgments. Even if they contradict what others say, even if at times you make mistakes.

(It's better to make your own mistakes, than someone else's.)

Owning your own mind doesn't mean simply being contrary, or reacting against the wishes of your parents, or peers. If we reject what our peers or leaders have taught us, simply because they say something is right, this doesn't make us independent thinkers. That's just what psychologists call "anti-conformity" rather than non-conformity. It's still letting someone dictate what you're thinking, by reaction.

Making up your own mind is not a reaction, it's an action. Can you explain the principles or values that led you to your current views? Without using lame, vague, or tiresome clichés learned from others? When did you form these views? How long has it been since you re-examined in a light of evidence? I guess that's the million dollar question. But if you don't ask yourself, you will never own your own mind...

## Time Machine

Years, months, days, they come and go so fast.

Like a flash of light

That travels to the past.

I remember when I was a kid

No worries, nothing but wonderful stories,

Another day, another night

Childhood, everyday so bright

Christmas, my favorite time of the year,

A hug from mom, the gift you always wanted

Life so beautiful, so fulfilled

I remember back to them years,

Miss 'em a lot, so I hold them deep in my heart so dear,

Time machine, take me back to them years,

So mom could wipe away my tears

Hug me, tell me everything will be okay

Time machine, travel to the past.

Broken down at last

But those memories will stay with me forever,

As long as my memory can remember...

## Bad Boys

Push-push-ride-ride-live-live-die-die.

Glorious victorious bad boys for life

It's how it is when you walk the strife.

Being at war with the world, flip it and give it a twirl,  
This shhh is real. It's hard work to be king of the hill,

Listen to the rear of the thrills,

Such loud noise, barely being able to sleep.

The scars are just too deep,

Must be strong. So you wont weep,

Yell it out. Bleep, bleep, bleep,

Out of the top of your lungs. Playing rewind the things you  
done wrong. Bad memories to leave behind, new into a new  
evolution,

To be a gangster, the new solution,

Wanting to achieve the path to greatness.

But you must hang with the big boys madness,

Since the sun don't shine forever,

But we could shine together,

To open the sky and make Js fly,

Extravagance, a bad boy in fiasco.

Turning it up side down, as rascals,

Turn up the game to never let it rain, ain't it funny.

The things we do for money.

But don't get mad 'cause I tell it like it is.

Living in my world is a sin.

Striving for victory, strong wood made of hickory.

Do it big, pull out the strap, and light up the sky.

Hit them from the left, the right, from all sides.

We all die, can you walk and talk?

Can you talk and chew gum?

Can you swim in the blood from the gun?

Are you always a bad boy? Any time?

Or just tough when you put it on rhymes?

An extravagant baaaaaaaaaaaaaad boy for life,

So drop the pen and pick up the knife,

It's addictive, prison, so conflictive, a seductive side, ride or  
die,

Left side, right side, north side, south side.

We all die, nothing left but a tormented mind,

Hate this crazy life or love it, it's all good.

Hate the playa, but not the hood.

To stand on your own two feet.

Ride like you did on the street,

Light up the sky, ride through the dark night.

The sun don't shine forever, but we could shine together.

Condemned to eternal domination, in a crew of death  
creation. Watching your back and you watching mines,

To be stuck forever doing time, bad boys forever.

The sun wont shine at times, but we could shine together,

Putting out the flames without rain.

Hate on me and not the game,

Troubled youth, troubled mind,

Come to prison, do the time, earn your stripes.

Put down the strap, pick up the knife,

Bad boy, there are badder ones than you,

Come meet the crew,

Playa hatas, riders of the night,

Light up the sky and if you can't hang, you will cry.

Lets keep it real, you scared! I can see your fear from toe to  
ear.

Drop the act, it's a fact, your not hard. It's a fact, you will  
crack.

You can't rock it. So stop it.

Your hands are shaking. The act, you will drop it.

To see fear in your dreams

Wishing to leave the bad boys life to the real (G)

So let it go, let it flow. Bad boys until we grow old,

Or till death will take its toll.

So hear the words coming from this, when I teach.

Stop and listen. This bad boy is not dissing,

But trying to prevent your enlistment,

Stop balling out of control, but if you're down. Then, lets roll,

lets roll, Come see me at bad boys home, I got you in mind.

So for now, I'll drop the rhymes, to get back to doing time,

And watch out for the masses,

'Cause I'm done giving classes.

Keep checking The Beat Without.

Being a mentor is what it's all about...

What's up my young minds. Extending my regards, dropping  
off this new piece and hopefully you can catch my drift. I'm not  
preaching or pretending I'm a saint, I'm just trying to look out,  
'cause I'm in no position to scold anyone. But if I could touch  
at least one soul and guide you into a good path, it's worth my  
time. I'm looking forward to any comments. I'm here if you need  
me. Just (holla) keep positive and I advise you to read a lot. It  
helps expand your mind. To develop more of the poetry skills.

## If You Could Turn Back Time

If you could only tell in our own struggles, if we dare and want to turn back the cripple hands of time, to have the courage to change god's destiny for one's self, but first, let me take you back in time, to tell you a short version, of this boy, and since there is no better teacher in life, than life itself, there are memories that one wishes to leave behind and never be brought back to life, but to say the truth, to move forward, it can't be achieved without taking the proper steps to close the wounds, that have been bleeding for so long, but it takes courage to face reality and suppress one's weaknesses, to put aside all emotions that one holds deep inside the heart.

I faintly recollect of this young boy, who at the time was around 7 years old, who used to see things that his mind, could not process. For example, he remembers his father coming home, could not process for "drunk" as always. Demanding that his wife to get up and tend to his needs, as he was "the king of the castle" the wife, scared knew to react at the voice of the "king" to cater to his needs. But one time she didn't feel like putting up with it anymore, and even knowing what would happen she stood up for herself, and in return received the beating of a lifetime. She was tired of feeling belittled by the "king to castle" but he wasn't gonna have any lip coming from here.

The boy used to sleep on a mattress laid out on the floor. He was waken up by screams and being trampled but the boy just looked in horror, unable to lift a finger to protect his mother from the fury of the beast and till this day he has never felt so useless, the boy remembers seeing his father filling up balloons with "coke" that night wondering if the beating was gonna start again. The boy asked himself why his mom stayed with his father, after all he put her through? Was it out of love? Was it because she had nowhere to go? Or the simple tragedy of events of the battered woman's syndrome?

One day his mother's sister came to live with them and for a period of time everything seems right, the beatings have stopped the boy once again smiled but his father still came home "drunk". One cold night the boy needed to use the bathroom and cause he open the door, once again couldn't understand why? His father and aunt were kissing while they was naked and as he ran out crying his mother heard his cry to find his sister and husband cruel betrayal the young boys eyes now filled with sin.

From that day on the boys life spiraled out of control and his mother wasn't much of a mother any more. She lived with pity, sadness, and guilt by the side of her husband but why was the boy for his father sin? His father got arrested for drugs within time sent to federal prison with 15 year

## BALA (CONT.)

term the same number as when the boy seen his father again 15 years later, how ironic, went to pick him up from juvy after a year of segregation the father try to be a father unable to succeed, so decided to teach the boy the life of crime the boy was now a young man full of hate and pain. He had struggled in life did what he had to feed his sister. When his mother neglected to do so haunted by her own demons the father and the young man started doing robberies, car jacking, selling dope, kidnapping, murder, and as the young man kept killing all innocence was gone. Lost.

His eyes now bleed the sins for his soul too late to turn back time and when he finally got locked up in ('93) he grew from a young man to a convict and he took to flashes in his mind and awoken by maturity. Realized that his father only used him and father always was waiting in the car or somewhere else while the son committed murder, sins. He was having flashes of his mothers pain and he has forgiven her, for whatever she did she still is his mother flashes of his 2 brothers now in prison themselves flashes of 2 sisters who live with the needle in the arms, flashes of his pride and joy his butterfly. Who wonders if they are kin flashes of his younger brother, who will not have the love his needs the beast created a cycle of destruction to end up being kidnapped himself tortured and his neck sliced. Karma has a way of getting back at you.

The young man is now a convict who will spend his last breath behind brick walls, a victim of the beast. Rotting to the core, a man of very little faith but knowing that there is a (God) and if he could turn back time, he would protect his mother, sisters, brothers, with any means necessary even if he ends up with the same faith. "Prison a small sacrifice for the love of family to protect them from the malice of the beast, but if time could tell what future may hold so he won't have so much hate in his heart so much pain so many tears which he can't expelled for what one don't know does not hurt you but time will not turn back and what not kills you only makes you stronger. For it is what it is only in the mind the memories the heart destiny can be changed one must stay within your time frame since there is no better teacher than life itself let that young boy life mistake, not become your own. It is what it is time cannot be turned back. What's done is done, how funny it is that when tragedy strikes, one wishes to turn back time to say "I love you" to those you hold deep in your heart if you could see into the future. Would you change gods course? Who knows!! But it is what it is time cannot be changed but you can change your future...

## My Dear

Life without you is very painful  
As day by day I sit in this cell  
Wishing to hear from you, in the whisper of the mail  
But I love you so much  
And I crave from you just a hug, or one touch  
To look into your eyes full of shine and lust  
I miss you. Oh, I miss you so much.  
As time passes so slow  
My heart starts to feel so cold  
But yet here, our anniversary so near  
I have not much to offer you, my dear  
But me, as I slowly from your heart disappear  
Heart broken, from one too many shed tears  
I ask myself, why is she so far away from my love?  
As I try, and try, to bring myself back into your heart  
I don't understand  
Am I no longer your man?  
Or but a single memory of what we once had?  
You become so distant, so far apart, but I love you!  
And you will always have the keys to my heart...

## You Hold Me Together

Like a blooming rose, you are one and unique  
Baby, it is you that I've always seek  
You are crystal water from the mountain top  
Your love  
Pours into my heart, like rain that won't stop  
I often think of you  
And have many beautiful dreams  
(My love) you make my sleep so sweet  
And when we kiss, my lips can taste your lips  
As I caress your soft and sensual hips  
But as I wake, to find myself still in this box  
I again think of you  
And that makes my heart pump non-stop  
(Nena) you and Felicity  
Are waiting for me to come home  
I wish to do so, so together we could grow old  
I love you both with all my heart  
But I also need you to know  
If by any chance I don't make it back  
Means, my heart pumps no more  
But always remember me with all your love  
And read again and again  
All the above...

## BALA (CONT.)

### Invisible Mail

The strangest thing happened to me today.  
 An invisible mailman passed my way.  
 He gave me something that wasn't quite there.  
 Because invisible mail is very rare.  
 So I open this nothing real wide.  
 To find even less than nothing inside.  
 The writing was neat as I recall.  
 So sweet, it was nothing at all.  
 A perfume was there to smell.  
 But with my nose I couldn't tell.  
 So I'm writing back with love, you can bet.  
 Thanks for the letter I never did get.  
 Maybe next time you'll think twice.  
 To this sound advice.  
 I could be out there where things could be better.  
 And you could be in here expecting a letter.

### Reading Between The Lines

When my wife first informed me of her desire to become a Jehovah Witness, I was joyful for her. I made the mistake to not "read between the lines." For her message to me was "that she wanted a better life." I thought, firme for her. Less worries for me. Yet, I didn't catch on to what she wanted from me. And today, I believe that because of not reading between the lines. I continued trusting my own understanding, thinking everything was going to be firme. Between her and I, and my own understanding as usual, betrayed me. As I got caught in my own web of wrong doing. And I believe I lost her. In here, I must do what I have to do. But nothing prevents us from seeking spiritual maturity. Gangsters need love too...

### Success

Success: Isn't built on success, it's built on failure,  
 It's built on frustration.  
 Sometimes it's built on catastrophe.  
 Truth: Is the ultimate power, when truth comes around,  
 All lies have to run and hide.  
 I Do: What I do, you like it, great, you don't,  
 Go listen to someone else,  
 I'm sticking with the people who stick with me.  
 My Real Name Is: Jaime Estrada  
 That's me, Bala, is the piece of me that I give away,  
 To the public, I don't want to give all of me away,  
 "Cause I won't have nothing left."  
 Doing something that nobody thinks is gonna work and  
 stick with it, that's my life,  
 Bravery comes along as a gradual accumulation of  
 discipline...

### How To Forgive

It takes a lifetime to learn how to live  
 How to share, how to give, how to forgive  
 How to face tragedy that come our way  
 How to have courage, to face each day  
 How to smile, when the heart is sore  
 How to go on when you can't take no more,  
 How to laugh, when all you want to do is cry  
 How to be brave, when we have to say goodbye  
 How to still love when our loss is so great  
 How to forgive, when I only urge to kill  
 How to be sure that God is really there,  
 How to forgive, if I really don't care?

## Just Listen

Say young skillet, they say we come to learn to do one thing above all others. That is to learn to apply all we learned. Not all people are open minded, open hearted. Not all people have positive energy. Negativity rules 85% of the men in the joint. Find the eagle-hearted people. And keep your distance from the snake hearted fools. I treat people as they treat me. I'll forgive the mistake, but never forget the error. If you step in crap, you will smell like crap. And if you think small, you yourself will be small. (Jesus said) "Do not cast pearls before they shine." There is a lot of truth in such small things to say.

## This Paradise

Time can ruin the way you see things through,  
 So what are you trying to prove?  
 This is hell on earth, (I made it rain).  
 Put the finger on the trigger,  
 Craving for my rep to get bigger.  
 This is automatic,  
 Drop you, if you give me static.  
 Snowy weather, cold veins,  
 Murder, lives destroyed in pain.  
 Gangsters Paradise, ride and die,  
 Or end up in the system, ain't no surprise.  
 (So make it rain),  
 Give and receive the life's stains.  
 So, (what's the scenario), act the fool,  
 Get laid out too!  
 (Make it rain) when it rains, it pours,  
 My style, hostile.  
 Put 'em up, put 'em down,  
 Break you proper if you run the mouth.  
 A different comprehension,  
 Another solar system, another dimension.  
 Just the way it is,  
 This is so (ill),  
 Driving deep the shiny steel.  
 Murder in the eyes,  
 The hunting stench, that bring the flies.  
 Deadly day and deadly night,  
 Hunted by the devil in Gangster Paradise.  
 Crumble, young boy, crumble,  
 Feel the roar as I rumble.  
 I feed when I feel the hunger.  
 Deadly time, deadly mind,  
 (Locked up for life).  
 So let it rain, feel untamed.  
 Jaded, I been around the block,  
 Can't make it stop.  
 This is really whack,  
 The train has jumped the track.  
 Letting my pen flow, sitting on my rack.  
 Struggling to maintain,  
 (So let it rain).  
 Time slowing ruining my brain.  
 Gangster in disguise, G's going crazy.  
 Another perspective,  
 Let it rain to be disrespected.  
 Taking you chunk by chunk,  
 You ain't no real gangster, you punk.  
 Prison is a selection,  
 A new edition to the collection.  
 So now, I'm bringing it to a national attention,  
 (Open your eyes), gangsters paradise is a fatal injection.  
 We see through the layers,  
 In prison, there is no playas.  
 A big difference between a thug and a gangster.  
 A thug tries to be tough,  
 A gangster is a diamond in a rough.  
 So have you had enough?  
 Or bring your butt to the big house,  
 Just remember the (scenario) if you a thug.  
 You better off listening to the radio.  
 No finger snapping in here,  
 You'll be living day by day in fear...

## Destiny

Watch your thoughts, they become your emotions.  
 Watch your emotions, they become your words.  
 Watch your words, they become your habits.  
 Watch your habits, they become your character.  
 Watch your character, it becomes your destiny...



I can't blame you, my love, I planted this bad seed  
in our lives  
Condemned you with me, to doing time

### An Open Book

An angry soul is what I have, violence and hate is in  
what I grew up.  
But I can I face reality and show my true self?  
Everybody has secrets of his own.  
So I will out mines in my poems,  
For everyone to see.  
So you could feel apart of me as you read.  
Don't judge this book by it's cover, you can always be  
wrong,  
It could turn out to be the best read of them all.  
So I'm gonna open this book as of now.  
A little old and turned out.  
From hand to hand,  
Passed all around but a little love will go along way

### What Would Drive Me Crazy If I Couldn't Have It?

My baby mother ask me the other night. Well I got to say females off top, 'cause man can't be alone, it's even in the bible, "It is not good for man to be alone," the Lord said (Gen 2:8). Like when I was a teenager it was miserable for me to have no friends 'cause I really wanted to talk to someone but a female only. Don't get me wrong I had a lot of friends but vatos, my set brothers. But you can't open up to a vato. I started to go on chat lines and web sites, 'cause I never had time to holla at a female 'cause I wouldn't go to school or movies, I was always posted on the block gettin' money and the only time I could holla at a female was midnight when I was home on the chat line or the web site, I was alone at age fourteen, I know half of the nation's people are alone. That why there are dating ads on paper or pen pals or websites, why else are all those dating ads and websites for people? We look to fill the loneliness. We surround ourselves with money, houses, work, vacations, gangs, but none prove suitable, 'cause at the end of the day we still have a deep down dissatisfaction. Look at Adam, newly minted by God, looked though all created things in the garden to fill his loneliness. Lord brought Adam, "wild animals and birds, but nothin' took Adam's loneliness. Then God got it right and made the "female," Adam could exclaim, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, "no more lonely nights in the garden." The two became one and lived happily ever after, or did they?

To make the two became one and fill the loneliness, God made us sexual. Here the question, is the cure worse than the disease? Can we be worse off being alone or being sexual? Fire can cook food, fire can also burn down the house, in the same way, our sexuality is very powerful. "Uniting Adam to Eve." It can make lonely ass Adam the happiest man on earth. "Second as the song goes — to look for love in all the wrong places" human sexuality is abused to sell everything from crack to cars to beer. It can destroy health, marriages, and families. What was God thinkin'?

Our sexuality does a lot of things. First, it connects us to others. Despite being terrified of rejection, a female almost against her will finds herself stepping up to a vato to say, "Would you go out with me?" You see miracles happen everyday, second, our sexuality commits us to another, a husband says, "That's my wife." She grimaces but agrees. For better or for worse. "That's my husband" they belong to one another. The bond of marriage is the deepest commitment a "man and woman" can make. And sexual intimacy is the gorilla glue of marriage, "than, our sexuality give life." Through sexual intimacy, a married couple literally give vida when it conceives a child. When we give our ourselves in caring relationship, vida is created. "What was God thinking? He created us sexual and saw that it was very damn good." Damn I can't live with out my baby mother, te amo baby girl.

**ROYAL LEIJA** In all honesty this man who writes us from the Charlotte Correctional Institution in Punta Gorda, Florida, lets us know what would drive him crazy if he couldn't have it... And where most men wouldn't stand up to say it, he boldly let's us know what's probably on every straight man's mind, especially when isolated from the rest of the world. And of course that's women. He takes us on a ride through his mind to make frequent stops at ideas of why sexuality is so important in our lives. Even dating back as early as Adam and Eve... And then he closes with a poem to his baby's mother that really captures the essence of what it means to have to do a lot of time with a romantic loved one on the outside waiting, or in most cases, not waiting... We really enjoyed his latest installment and have a feeling you readers will too...

Never look into my eyes  
If all you do is lie  
Never say hello  
If you really mean good-bye.

### Never

Never say I love you  
If you really don't care  
Never talk about feelings  
If they ain't really there

Never hold my hand  
If you going to break my heart  
Never say you are going to  
If you don't plan to start

Never look into my eyes  
If all you do is lie  
Never say hello  
If you really mean good-bye.

If you really mean forever  
Then say you will try  
Never say forever  
'Cause forever makes  
Me cry  
So please try (baby girl)

Prison, full of long days and lonely nights.  
Grown men acting foolish trying to commence a fight  
Some people call this home but to me it's never that  
Home ain't where 24-7 I got to watch my back

check out the rest of Chris Grajeda's BWO piece on page 47

